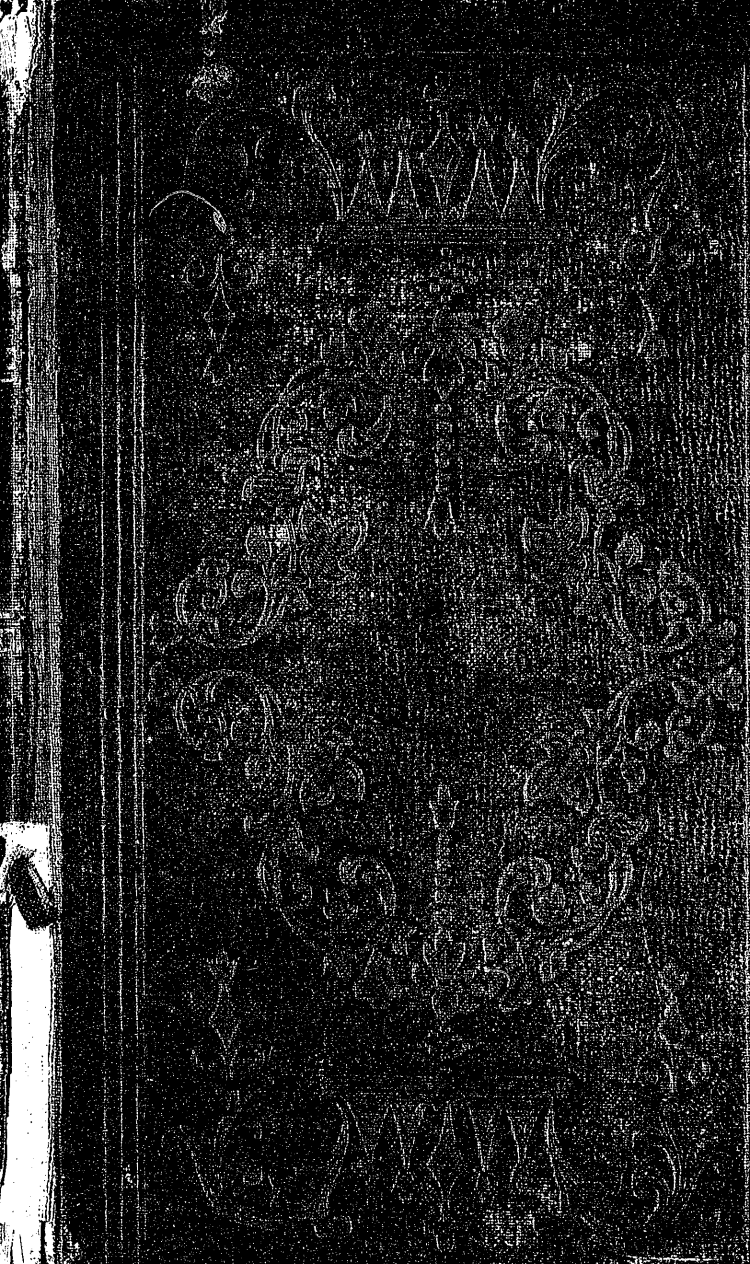




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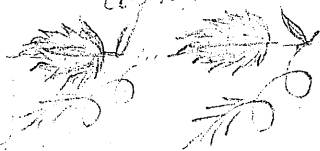
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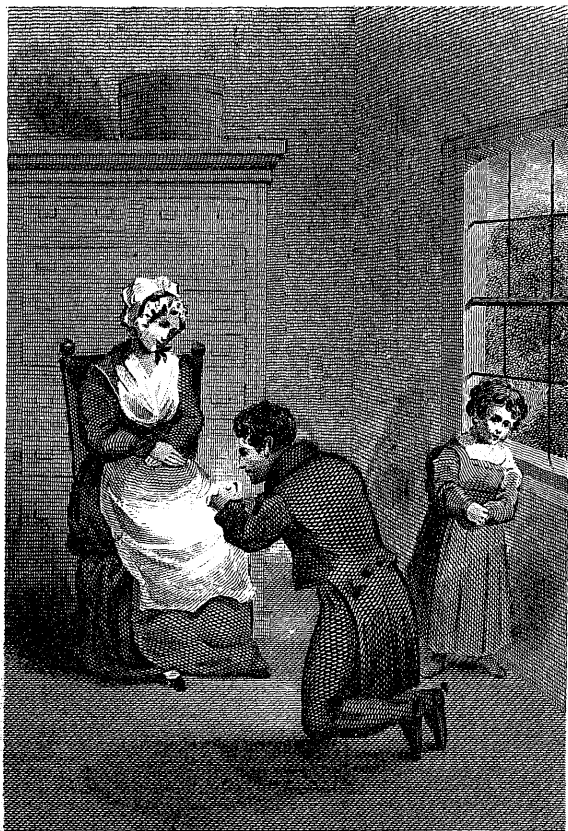
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March 19, 1852.





E.W. Mumford Sc.

"He then kneeled down before the child's mother and putting his hands together, like a penitent offender asked her forgiveness."

P. 110.

THE

✓
TEACHER TAUGHT.

HUMBLE ATTEMPT

TO MAKE THE

**PATH OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER
STRAIGHT AND PLAIN.**

WRITTEN FOR THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, AND REVISED
BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,

PHILADELPHIA:

No 146 CHESTNUT STREET.

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P R E F A C E.

IN the preparation of this volume, the author has availed himself of the opinions and suggestions of some of the most judicious and successful teachers in the country ; so that the principles he has attempted to establish may be regarded as the result of much experience and observation.

There are some questions touching the organization, instruction, and discipline of a Sunday-school, which we have designedly passed by, under the impression that they involve no essential principle, and that a discussion of them may lead to useless controversy. The outline of the system and of its general departments being defined, the filling up may be safely left to the judgment and discretion of those who administer it.

It has been said that teachers are of all men the most indocil. We trust that such a remark is inapplicable to Sunday-school teachers, inasmuch as they are presumed to be examples to their pupils in all things, and especially in meekness and docility.

We hope our title will be without offence. It truly and briefly indicates the design of the volume,

and assumes no more than the "Teacher's Guide," which has been so long and so favourably known on both sides of the Atlantic. We can truly say, that the desire to dictate is far from us, and that the more closely we have examined the duties, temptations and responsibilities of Sunday-school teachers, the more we have felt our incompetence to afford them counsel or aid.

May the grace of God, our Saviour, so enlighten, guide and sanctify all teachers, as to make them instrumental in gathering many lambs into the safe and peaceful fold of the great Shepherd.

September, 1839

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THE TEACHER TAUGHT.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

To establish a Sunday-school, or any other school, requires time and pains. Somebody must labour, and labour hard, and skilfully, and steadily; not only to begin, but to sustain it; not only at first, but always; from week to week, and from year to year. The idea seems to have been entertained by some, (if we rightly interpret their conduct,) that the Sunday-school is, literally, a self-supporting institution, and, of course, peculiarly fitted for an indolent generation. But its motto, from the beginning, has been "TRY, TRY." Effort, continued and patient effort, even under all manner of discouragements and disappointments, is (so far as human agency is concerned) the prop and stay of Sunday-schools. And their whole history, in this country at least, furnishes the most conclusive evidence that to the untiring, devoted, patient labourer, the measure of success has been full, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Let inquiry be made in schools where God has appeared to revive his work, and in which his exceeding grace and mercy have been displayed in turning many from darkness to light, and it

will generally be found that the faithful labourer has laboured more faithfully ; the fervent prayer has been more fervent ; the tithes have been gathered into the storehouse with unwonted diligence, and God has been proved therewith ; the windows of heaven have been opened and the full blessing has been poured out.

Though this disposition to give all diligence to the work, is a pre requisite to success, which nothing can supply, yet great advantage may be derived from a knowledge of the experience of others, and of the results to which different modes of organization, instruction, and discipline have conducted them. So that, while on the one hand, a school established according to the most approved directions would, in the absence of such devotion as we have above supposed, languish and die without character enough to preserve its memory ; yet, on the other hand, a school of the best materials might be conducted with far greater facility and success if its energies were applied in such manner and form as experience and observation show to be best adapted to the end.

It is high time the Sunday-schools of the United States were put upon an elevated and permanent foundation ; that they had obtained a specific and commanding character and influence ; that the principles of the institution, as such, were well understood and defined ; and that something approaching to uniformity in its external order and relations, and in its modes of discipline and general instruction should be attained, as far as may be consistent with the accomplishment of the chief object.

We cast our eye over the many hundred thousands of intelligent and immortal beings who compose our Sunday-schools. We think how rapidly, and

by what simple and cheap means, this crowd has been assembled, and how constantly its character and numbers are changing. What amazing interests are involved in the avowed purpose which has called them together; of what indefinite enlargement such a system is capable! How grand the results of every year's operation; nay, how grand the result of the labours of a *single Sabbath, if this beautiful machinery really is what it seems to be.*

But, leaving this general survey, and mingling with superintendents, teachers, and pupils, what do we find?

Are the schools generally well organized? Is there a system of faithful, kind, unwearied superintendence? Are those men who are most competent in all respects found at the head of them? Is there a vigilant attention to the character, conduct, and habits of the school at large, exhibited in the order, punctuality, and correct deportment of each individual member, as well as in the completeness and accuracy of the minute books, &c.? Can we trace on the records the connexion of each teacher and pupil with the school? *As to the pupil*, when he entered, who were his parents, what was his age, who was his teacher, what was his attendance and progress, when and why he left, and where he went? And *as to the teacher*, how long, how punctually, and how faithfully he served his Master in this high vocation? Do we find the system of instruction adopted with due consideration, and with the *enlightened and discriminating approbation of the teachers* who are to administer it? and, when thus adopted, do we find the merits and adaptation of the system tested from time to time, by

close, personal, individual examination and inquiry?

Generally.—Do we find the teachers intelligent, serious, diligent in their preparation for their work; meek, anxious to *learn* as a *privilege*, but willing to *teach* as a *duty*; giving evidence that they feel how sacred and important is the trust they have assumed; availing themselves of every means of improvement; *giving themselves completely up to the business of teaching*, so far as a faithful discharge of duty requires it; punctual and steady in their attendance at school, and on such meetings as are profitable to themselves and conducive to the prosperity of the cause; maintaining towards each other, on all occasions and in all circumstances, a spirit of kindness, forbearance, and confidence; discarding envyings, jealousies, evil surmisings and desires of *personal fame or credit*; giving courteous consideration to the views and opinions of others; maintaining with Christian mildness, what one believes to be right, without endeavouring *for the sake of reputation or triumph*, to show another to be wrong; and thus securing that harmony of feeling, and unity of purpose, without which any coöperation must be perplexing, feeble and fruitless?

Individually.—Is each teacher found to regard the children of his class as *his* children, so far as Sunday-school instruction is concerned? Does he feel a *special, personal responsibility* for the character, habits, and conduct of each individual member, so far as faithful teaching, regular visitation, and affectionate counsel can form, or influence them? Do we find him sustaining *his part* of the great system which extends so far, and embraces so many? And is he anxious to do his full share

towards improving that system, extending it over the earth, and embracing within it every child that can profit by its agency? And are these teachers from among the most intelligent and well taught Christians, selected from the church or congregation to which the school is attached, "grounded and settled" in the faith, and whose teaching is enforced by a bright and holy example? And if this is their character, do they study and labour to make their words intelligible and profitable to those who receive their instructions; accommodating themselves with great care and patience to the limited capacity of their pupils, and giving milk to those who cannot bear strong meat?

And, finally, among the hundreds of thousands of *pupils*, are there found *one hundred thousand* who have clear views of *simple religious truth*, such as a child of good capacity, at the age of eight or ten years, may well understand? Nay, more, will *one child in ten* tell us, what distinguishes man from the brute; what relation man sustains to God; what are God's distinguishing attributes, and what is man's moral character in his sight; what evidence there is of the truth of the Bible, and what entitles it to more consideration than any other book; whence the institution of the Christian Sabbath, and what the obligation to observe it; what are the means of grace, and how are they made effectual; what is salvation, and how it may be secured; why we believe that if a man die he shall live again, and on what we rest the conviction of a just and eternal retribution in the world to come?

These are but specimens of a series of questions; and our inquiry is, *whether one child in ten, enrolled this day in our Sunday-schools, can give*

to them intelligent, scriptural answers? Before a reply is given, examine, and consider what is fairly implied in the words "*intelligent and scriptural.*" And then go one step farther, and see whether we shall find among these children a marked, prevailing reverence for the Sabbath, and for the ordinances and institutions of religion? Are they making sensible and observable progress in the *knowledge* (not to say *love*) of religious truth? Are their minds expanding, and as the fallow ground is broken up, is the good seed skilfully cast and securely lodged? Though they may speak as children, think as children, and understand as children now, are they evidently preparing to put away childish things? In one word, is there to be seen, by the close observer, in our American Sunday-schools, such evidence of the success, and flattering prospects of the institution as its friends and advocates ask, expect and assert in its behalf?

We have no hesitation in answering, No, **NOTHING LIKE IT**; on the contrary, it is to be feared that of a large proportion of our Sunday-school children it may be justly said, "that they are bewildered with verbal mysteries, where there is no refreshment of truth for the eye, and are wearied with wandering from shadow to shadow, where there is all the fatigue of continual progress, without the advance of a single step in real knowledge."

Shall we be pointed to this or that school, and to one and another company of teachers, to show us that such an opinion is not borne out by evidence? Shall we be told of the great improvements that have been made; of the increase of schools, teachers and scholars; of the obvious advantages of the

library over the reward system, and of the selected lessons over the old mode of instruction? All this we admit, and more. The labour bestowed by many teachers in the work of preparation is far beyond what it once was; the standard of instruction is raised; more is required of children; and in much that respects the character and management of some schools, the advance is manifest. But the system we advocate and strive to build up should show much more than all this.

A system of religious instruction designed expressly for children, well adapted to their improvement, and skilfully administered, would show us among its subjects, a great majority of intelligent, (though perhaps merely *speculative*) Christians. We speak now merely of an *understanding* of divine truth, such as is obtained of geography or astronomy, and not of its saving efficacy, when employed by the Spirit of God to convert the soul. We say, that such a system of instruction, as we have described in an interrogative manner, *must* make children familiar with the leading facts, doctrines, and principles of the Bible. That they are not acquainted with them, a very slight examination will prove, and the number of those who see and mourn over the evidence of this fact is increasing every day.

Then as to external conduct,—profaneness, Sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, falsehood, games of chance, dishonesty, insubordination, contention and the like, are known to prevail, in some places to a great degree, even among Sunday-school children.

And who will undertake to say how many children are excluded from the advantages of our system only because its administration is so defective and

superficial ; or how many are availing themselves of such advantages as it *seems* to offer, while, so far as instruction, suitable, seasonable instruction and discipline are concerned, they go away as they came, feeling as if no man cared for their souls.

We read, now and then, an anecdote of the uncommon intelligence or tenderness of conscience which some Sunday-school child in this country, or some other, has discovered ; or perhaps an account of some happy death, in which unusual hope and faith sustained the spirit in its early struggle, and we bless the institution which shows us such results ; and if, in addition to this, our annual reports should tell us, that *one in fifty* of the docile, susceptible, unprejudiced hearts in our Sunday-schools under the training of *select religious teachers*, every Sabbath, and often for a series of years, has been constrained by the love of Christ to make his peace with God, and cast in his lot with His people ; with how much satisfaction should we hail the result of Sunday-school operations !

And well may we thank God and take courage, if his blessing crowns our efforts, even to a much less extent than this ; but what shame and confusion belong to us, that a system *capable of so much, accomplishes so little*, and *that*, because of the indolence, indifference, or unnecessary ignorance of those who manage it, or of those whom it is designed to bless and exalt !

What, then, shall be done ? Why, in the first place, let us ascertain what is the grand defect. This we have no doubt will almost universally be found in the QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS, and it is mainly with a view to supply this defect, and to aid

those who are disposed to improve their qualifications, that this volume has been prepared.

We are aware that very judicious and useful labour has been already done in the same field ; and we come in, not to supplant, but to help. We have attempted to avoid extravagant, theoretical, and refined speculations ; but do not pretend to have brought to view all the judicious and valuable lessons which experience has taught, and which would have added much to the utility of our labours, if they had been accessible ; neither is any pretension made to originality ; we have freely used all the materials within our reach, though we believe without trespassing on the rights of others.

The reader will observe that when we have occasion to illustrate a principle or refer to other sources of information, almost exclusive reference is made to the publications of the American Sunday-school Union. This is not because other societies and individuals have not produced books equally unobjectionable, but because the peculiar principles of the Am. S. S. Union make it necessary that no books should receive even its indirect sanction which are not prepared in accordance with those principles ; and as the present volume is designed for the use of that society, it is necessary for the author to conform to this feature of their constitution.

If a single teacher shall be guided, assisted, or encouraged by our efforts, they will not have been in vain ; and we cannot but hope that a general adoption of the views we have attempted to set forth and explain, would greatly extend the blessings of the institution, and give it a good degree of permanence, favour and success in our land and through the civilized world.

CHAPTER II.

F THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

§ 1. *Original design and character of Sunday-schools.*—The religious instruction of children and youth in some form on the Lord's-day is not regarded as a new thing in Christendom; but the employment of that day for the benefit of those *that are without other means or opportunities of instruction* was the distinguishing feature of Raikes' plan, and, *as a system of benevolence*, unquestionably originated with him.

In 1781-2, an errand led him into a neighbourhood in his native city, (Gloucester, Eng.,) which was inhabited chiefly by the lowest class of labourers in a manufactory, whose children, from six to twelve or fourteen years of age, were running wild in the street. He was told that on the Lord's-day, when all ages and classes were free from employment and restraint, their noise and blasphemy were insufferable. Farmers, and others in the neighbouring towns and villages, complained of the depredations upon their property as more frequent and bold on that day than on all the rest of the days of the week. To remedy these evils, persons duly qualified were hired, at twenty-two cents a day, to open schools for two hours in the morning and afternoon, to receive and instruct the ignorant in the art of reading; to teach the catechism, and to lead them to church.

It is a false opinion which some persons have entertained, that Sunday-schools at first contemplated only the temporal advantage of the pupils, and were not used for their instruction in religious truths and duties. “The *due observance of the holy Sabbath*, and the recovery of children from vagrancy, disorder, and *irreligion*,” are mentioned by the benevolent Thornton (in 1807) “as that which connects the institution of Sunday-schools most nearly and vitally with the *religion* and welfare of the country.” And in one of the earliest circulars ever published on the subject, it is said, that the object of Sunday-schools is to teach children and others to read, and to instruct them in the knowledge of their duty as *rational and accountable beings*. It may be, and doubtless is, the fact, that this higher and more important object was greatly neglected, especially when the system was in the hands of hired teachers; but the object of the institution from its origin is clearly shown to have been, in part at least, the inculcation of religious truth.

In our own country this religious feature of the system has always been prominent. One of the earliest codes of regulations we have seen makes it “the special duty of teachers to impress on the minds of children the necessity of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” This was practicable even for such as could neither read nor write.

Raikes’ experiment was entirely successful; his plan was approved by some of the most wise and eminent men in the country;* similar schools were

* Soon after Raikes published his account. Bishop Horne, in deploring the depravity of the age, say allusion to this

established in other districts, and in 1811, at least, three hundred thousand children were reported as members of these schools.

§ 2. *The history of Sunday-schools in the United States.*—The history of the institution of Sunday-schools* in the United States, is briefly as follows :

There is good evidence that a school of this description was known in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, thirty or forty years before Raikes introduced the general system into England.† It was projected by a common school teacher for the purpose of giving instruction to indigent children, who were kept from the daily school by labour, as well as to give religious instruction to children in better circumstances. After the battle of Brandywine, the room which was occupied by the school was taken for an hospital, and it was not afterwards reopened.

On the 19th of December, 1790, a meeting of eight or ten persons was held in Philadelphia, of which the late venerable Bishop White was chairman, at which measures were adopted which resulted in the organization of an association on the

subject, "Dark as is the prospect, a ray of light has broken in upon us, and that from an unexpected quarter. An institution has been set up by a private individual, to the excellency of which every man who loves his country must rejoice to bear his testimony. The sagacity of the wisest cannot see how much good may in the end be done by it, and how far it may go towards saving a great people from impending ruin."

* Called, perhaps, with equal propriety Sabbath, Lord's-day, or First-day schools, but when first established in England and this country universally called *Sunday-schools*, and, therefore, so called at the present day.

† Sunday-school Journal, March 4, 1835.

11th day of July, 1791, known by the name of "the society for the institution and support of First-day or Sunday-schools in the city of Philadelphia, and the districts of Southwark and the Northern Liberties." The purpose of the society was thus set forth :

"Whereas, the good education of youth is of the first importance to society, and numbers of children, the offspring of indigent parents, have not proper opportunities of instruction, previously to their being apprenticed to trades ; and whereas, among the youth of every large city various instances occur, of the first day of the week, called Sunday—a day which ought to be devoted to religious improvement—being employed to the worst of purposes, the depravation of morals and manners. It is, therefore, the opinion of the subscribers, that the establishment of First-day, or Sunday-schools, in the city and liberties, would be of essential advantage to the rising generation ; and for effecting that benevolent purpose, they have formed themselves into a society."

One clause of the constitution provided, that "the instruction to be given in these schools should be confined to writing and reading from the Bible, and such other moral and religious books as the society may from time to time direct."

The act of incorporation, which was obtained in 1796, required that "all the income of the society should be applied to the establishment of schools, and the free instruction therein of children of indigent parents."

On the 1st of February, 1791, the first school was opened for forty female pupils, and the teacher was allowed eighty dollars a year for tuition and room-

rent. This sum was afterwards increased to one hundred dollars. The hours of instruction were, in winter, from 8 to 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ A. M., and from 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 $\frac{1}{2}$, or from 1 to 3 P. M., as was most convenient. Other schools were opened in a few weeks on the same terms, and one dollar was added to their annual wages for each additional scholar.

In about a year after the opening of these schools, it was proposed to the society "to print a number of small moral books, to be lent by the visiting committee, or the visiters of the schools, to such of the scholars as will peruse them at home, and to be given as premiums, at such examinations as the board of visiters may think proper to hold."

The proposition was not entertained, but the society authorized the purchase of books for this purpose to the amount of twenty-six dollars, and the bill was made up of a quantity of Bibles, one dozen Economy of Human Life, fifty copies Friendly Instructor, six dozen Watts' Songs, one dozen Whole Duty of Woman, half a dozen Catechism of Nature.

In a collection purchased at a subsequent period, are found Dodsley's Fables, Barbauld's Lessons, Esop's Fables, Beauties of the Creation, Book of Nature, Power of Religion, and Fruits of a Father's Love. Sixty-three books of this kind cost thirteen dollars and fifty cents. Sanford and Merton was also a very popular premium.

In 1794, one of the officers of the society offered his services gratuitously for six months, as an instructor of a school to be composed entirely of children who had become orphans during the prevalence of the yellow fever in 1793.

The examination of the schools was usually made on the Sabbath, and the exercises were read-

ing and spelling; in which those who excelled as it respected pronunciation, emphasis, and pauses, received premiums. Among the premiums thus awarded in 1798, we find, Looking-glass for the Mind, Adventures of Alphonso, Present for an Apprentice, Hieroglyphical Bible, Trial of Witnesses, (probably Bp. Sherlock's.) And in 1810¹¹-12 are Sacred Biography, the Orphan, or Honesty Rewarded, Jack of all Trades, Letter Writer, History of Lazy Lawrence, History of Joseph, Fall of Adam, Prompter, Shepherd Boy, History of Tom White, Lottery, and History of Two Shoemakers.

The late Mr. Divie Bethune of New York, assisted by his wife and her mother, Mrs. Isabella Graham, opened a school at their own expense in that city in 1803, and superintended that and two or three others which were soon afterwards commenced.

In 1805 some of the Philadelphia schools were reduced considerably in numbers, in consequence (as it was supposed) of the establishment of free schools on other days of the week.

In 1809 a Society in Pittsburg (Pa.) opened one or more Sunday-schools, taught by voluntary teachers.

In the summer of 1811, the Rev. Robert May, a missionary from the London Missionary Society, on his way to India, stopped in this country about a twelvemonth, and during that period succeeded in establishing a Sunday-school in Philadelphia very much on the present plan. He brought with him specimens of tickets, secured the erection of a suitable building, opened his school October 20, 1811, and conducted it himself until his re-embarkation in 1812. In the five following years

eighteen hundred children received instruction in that school. Mr. May died in Calcutta in August, 1818. He was a man of remarkably catholic spirit, and was offered four pulpits of four different denominations in New York on the same Sabbath.

“The female Union Society for the formation of Sabbath-schools” was formed in New York in January, 1816, and the New York Sunday-school Union in the following month. More than six thousand scholars were thus at once placed under Sunday-school instruction in that city.

The Sunday-schools established chiefly for secular instruction soon felt the effects of the new system of religious teaching, and gradually declined. In 1817, the Philadelphia Sunday and Adult School Union was formed; and in 1819, the First-day or Sunday-school Society resolved to appropriate its funds to such Sunday-schools, established by the various religious societies in Philadelphia, as might need assistance. It is in this way that this society now contributes to the establishment and support of Sunday-schools within its sphere.

At the close of the first year's operations of the Philadelphia Sunday and Adult School Union, it embraced forty-three schools, five thousand four hundred and fifty-eight white children, and about five hundred coloured children and adults; all under the care of five hundred and sixty-six gratuitous teachers. Most of these schools were formed in 1816 and 1817.

A plan for the regulation of Sunday-schools was soon afterwards published, presenting among other things the use of reward-tickets redeemable in money. A child received one blue ticket as a reward for reciting six verses of the Bible, one for a page

of the Catechism, and a hymn; and also for punctual attendance. Six blue tickets were redeemed with one red one, and one red ticket was redeemed with books of the value of one cent.

In 1819, the Philadelphia Sunday and Adult School Union was incorporated. The constitution authorized the managers "to loan to school societies, *free of interest*, any funds they might have beyond their necessities:" and also to publish books, "with the exception of such as treat of disputed points of doctrine; catechisms excepted."

The third annual report of the society attempts to correct the impression that Sunday-schools are intended only for the poor. "They are designed as much for the affluent as for the indigent. The great object is *religious instruction*. It is indeed given without money and without price, but is it therefore of no value to those who have the means, and who if it were vendible would secure it by purchase?"

The Philadelphia Sunday and Adult School Union gradually enlarged its operations until May, 1824, when there were connected with it seven hundred and twenty-three schools, located in seventeen different States, and embracing nearly fifty thousand scholars. It was now thought necessary to form a more general kind of connexion; and with this view the AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION was organized for the purpose of concentrating the efforts of Sabbath-school societies in the different sections of our country; strengthening the hands of the friends of religious instruction on the Lord's day; disseminating useful information; circulating moral and religious publications in every

part of the land; and planting a Sunday-school wherever there is a population.

The extent to which these various purposes have been accomplished, is shown in detail in the fifteenth annual report of the society,* (1839,) by which it appears that they have had in their connexion one thousand three hundred and sixty-four auxiliary schools and societies, and have been instrumental in circulating EIGHTEEN MILLIONS of scriptural publications, while they have established several thousand Sunday-schools in destitute parts of the country, which are still open, and are spreading knowledge and truth, and the means of salvation far and wide.

§ 3. *The design and peculiar characteristics of Sunday-schools in the United States.* We have seen that the primary reason for establishing schools on the Lord's-day was, that the children for whose benefit they were designed, were unemployed and unrestrained on that day, and could be collected, for the like purpose on no other day of the week. In this country the grand design of these schools has ever been to instruct children in the sacred Scriptures, and in their duties to God and man; and they are kept on the Lord's-day not from necessity, but, principally, because the exercises furnish appropriate employment for the sacred hours of that day. Exercises of penitence and devotion towards God are perfectly in keeping with, and, indeed, the safest excitement to, acts of benevolence towards men.

* This report, and any other of the society's permanent documents may be had gratuitously upon application to the society, or at any of its depositaries.

It has sometimes been objected to Sunday-schools that they are not of divine appointment. This has never been claimed. It pleases God by methods of his own choice to save them that believe, and while we cheerfully accord to the gospel ministry the pre-eminence among the means of grace, we rejoice that other means are also blessed. What is preaching but the exhibition and application of religious truth? The truth of God is the great instrument, and, so far as we know, the only instrument of conviction and saving conversion. Any judicious method of exhibiting and applying truth, however, though not of divine appointment, coincides in its tendency with the preaching of the gospel, and may, therefore, be expected to produce similar results.

What is a judicious method of doing this we are carefully to consider.

The success which has attended the agency of Sunday-schools must be regarded as an unequivocal token of the divine approbation. Its great object (as we have already shown) is to present truth to the mind, and bring it to bear upon the consciences of those who are not soured by prejudice, nor hardened in sin. Satan would fill the bushel with tares—the Sunday-school would defeat his purpose, and pre-occupy it with wheat; and we may safely challenge the proposition of any system more simple, rational, and practicable where (as in many portions of our country) there is moral power to administer it, than that which places in every neighbourhood a library of moral and religious books, adapted to various ages and capacities, which employs the children and youth of the vicinity to introduce one or more of them every week into the

families in which they reside; which offers the hand of Christian kindness to all who will receive it; applies the softening and restraining influence of the gospel to the character and heart; chastens the perverse temper; inculcates forgiveness, peace, and universal philanthropy; corrects evil habits; fixes the volatile thoughts and roving affections of early life upon substantial good; counsels the perplexed; guides the inquiring; diffuses the light of truth all around; nourishes the soul with bread from heaven, and finally leads it upward and onward to everlasting life and immortal joy.

Nor is it surprising that the blessing of God, which attends the dispensation of the gospel in other forms, should be commanded in great fulness on efforts like these. It is safe to estimate the number of persons who have been added to the church of Christ from Sunday-schools in this country within the last fifteen years, at SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND, and, so far as we learn, the instance has rarely occurred in late years, in which a revival of religion has not commenced in the Sunday-school, or embraced it in its progress. It is important that Sunday-school teachers should be deeply impressed with the conviction that the end of their labours is to improve the habits and tempers of their children, as well as their minds and manners; to persuade them to lead lives of holy obedience to all God's commands, and to secure for them, through the boundless mercy of God in Jesus Christ, a good hope of eternal life.

Another peculiar characteristic of our schools is, that they embrace all classes and ranks of children. There was a time even in this country when the benefits of the Sunday-school were enjoyed almost

exclusively by the children of poverty and neglect, and thus it is in England at the present day.

The idea that to attend such schools would be regarded as a confession of ignorance and want, was found to deter multitudes from attendance, and it was moreover seen that the advantages of a good Sunday-school were such as any parent might wisely seek for his own children. In our country distinctions of this kind cannot be maintained, and with few exceptions, and those in the most populous places, there will be found in our Sunday-schools, the children of the wealthiest and most elevated citizen, receiving lessons of virtue and heavenly wisdom side by side with the children of the humblest and most dependent; and not unfrequently from the lips of those who earn their bread by daily manual labour!

Our Sunday-schools carry knowledge, and peace and contentment to the abodes of ignorance, and guilt and poverty; and at the same time ennoble and enrich with heavenly treasures the children of science, refinement and affluence. We are all sinful; we are all ruined; there is but one salvation, and it is offered to all without respect of persons.

It has been lately a subject of general regret that there are not found in our schools a larger proportion of the class of children who especially require their aid.

It is unquestionably true, that in populous towns the children who most need the care and teaching of a Sunday-school, are very sadly neglected; but, so far as our observation extends, it is not to be attributed to *undue* care of any other class. There is no feature of the system of Sunday-schools, *in this country*, more striking than the facility

with which it has adapted itself to our peculiar character. Recognising no distinctions here but such as grow out of superior knowledge or virtue, the Sunday-school, when first opened, was opened for all who chose to avail themselves of its advantages ; and from the beginning it has been supposed that, as a religious institution, its advantages were needed by all. Such is the provision supposed to be made for the literary instruction of children, (at least in the older sections of our country,) that we were permitted to make Sunday-schools, at the outset, seminaries for instruction in religious truth, without unfitting them, in any measure, to afford every advantage which they were originally designed to bestow on the ignorant and neglected.

To draw this class within the influence of our schools, requires patient labour and untiring zeal. There should be in every populous place, some efficient benevolent organization, either within or without the Sunday-school, to be wholly employed to secure the attendance upon it of the class of children and adults who are destitute of other means of literary and religious instruction. Wherever such efforts have been made, the result has been an abundant recompense for all the labour and reproach which they have cost.

It is obvious, then, that the influence of the Sunday-school is not limited to any class or rank. Those who are religiously instructed at home, find it useful in impressing and illustrating truths already familiar. "Among the most enlightened and devoted Christians and clergymen of my acquaintance who have sent their children to Sunday-school," says the Rev. Dr. Leland of Charleston, (S. C.), "I have found but one sentiment, and that one of the

most lively gratitude for the evident advantages derived by their children from this privilege. I have no hesitation to declare my settled conviction that Sunday-school instruction is to children what the preaching of the word of God is to adults." Those who are without domestic restraint are instructed in the principles of subordination and obedience; essential not only to Christian character, but to the peace and indeed to the very existence of society; while those who are without either moral or intellectual cultivation, form, in a Sunday-school, habits of thinking and inquiring, and thus receive the elements of knowledge and true philosophy.

A well-ordered Sunday-school goes far to check the violation of the Sabbath; to beget a reverence for the Bible and for the institutions which spring up and live only under its influence; to diffuse useful knowledge; to establish habits of industry, sobriety, and civility; and to improve and elevate, intellectually and morally, the whole mass of society. So obvious is this tendency, that the celebrated Adam Smith said of the institution of Sunday-schools, that, "no plan, since the days of the apostles, promised to effect a greater change of manners, with equal ease and simplicity."

We might here subjoin testimony from every denomination of Christians, and from all parties in politics, and from leading men of all professions and stations in every section of our land, and indeed throughout Christendom, to the mighty influence of these schools on the interests of general education, on the Sabbath, on temperance, on social order, prosperity, and safety; but the volume is needed for another purpose, and we must dismiss

this topic by pledging ourselves to produce on any proper occasion, all, or any part of the evidence on this subject, to the very letter of the fulness and extent in which we have described it.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE NECESSITY OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS, AND THE PRELIMINARY MEASURES FOR ESTABLISHING THEM.

§ 1. *The uses and benefits of a Sunday-school.*
—Wherever there is a single rational being uninstructed in the truths of the Bible, there is need of Christian effort of some kind. In determining what it shall be, reference must be had to the peculiar circumstances of each case. If those whose duty it is to furnish such instruction are incapable, or indisposed to give it, the deficiency may be supplied from some other source. To train up a child in the way he should go, is the appropriate duty of the parent; but if it is neglected or improperly discharged, some other agency may be employed to supply the defect, and that without impairing at all parental obligation. The Sunday-school claims to be an appropriate agency for this purpose. As a system of education it has peculiar advantages. Among these the first and chief is, that the Bible is its grand text-book for all sciences; for let it be remembered that the man who is truly great in the learning of the Bible, will be truly great in the company of NEWTON, BACON, or LOCKE.

II. It establishes sound moral principles. These we derive from the Bible, and we illustrate and enforce them in intelligible and familiar ways, to show children and youth their connexion with the happiness and peace of each individual, and of all the dwellers upon earth. Thus it forms in the young mind principles of integrity and virtue, which, if fortified and preserved by a deep sense of religious obligation and responsibility, will make the pupil an honest, capable, intelligent citizen, a useful and happy man, and a friend and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. It is a system capable of universal application. It is adapted to every state of society, and to every class of people.

IV. The associations of the day are favourable to religious impressions.

V. Parents and other relatives of teachers and pupils are often led to think upon their ways, and turn their feet unto God's testimonies through the influence of a Sunday-school; especially is this the case when they see that the instruction received there by their children, produces in them the fruits of peace, industry, and filial obedience.

VI. Many have been induced to attend church and various other means of grace and instruction by the remote influence of Sunday-schools, or by the necessity or desire of accompanying their children.

VII. Intelligent and religious parents are often led by the inquiries of their children to examine forgotten or misapprehended truths, and they are compelled to search the Scriptures.

VIII. Neatness and good personal manners are greatly promoted, and a desire to appear respectably is excited in both parents and children.

IX. The distribution of cheap, popular, moral, and religious books among the people is secured by this means. They are taken from the library and scattered without expense of time or money among the families to which the children and teachers belong.

X. The administration of this system has done much to promote charity and kind feelings among Christians of various denominations.

XI. The necessity of teaching others, is a spur to the examination of Scripture truth; in the analysis and illustration of which, the attention of teachers is arrested and fixed upon their own condition and prospects, and they are thus excited to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel.

XII. The spirit of benevolence and Christian effort has been greatly increased by Sunday-schools. It has been affirmed that nineteen-twentieths of the British missionaries, and a large proportion of the evangelical ministers of Great Britain under forty years old, became pious, or received their first permanent religious impressions while connected with a Sunday-school; HENDERSON, PATTERSON, and MORRISON are of this number.

XIII. The influence of children over each other *in a well regulated Sunday-school*, is powerful and salutary, and cannot be obtained so advantageously by any other similar association.

XIV. The order and discipline of such a school are fitted to form habits of attention and seriousness, as well as a spirit of docility and subordination in all the relations of life.

XV. The instruction is given by persons with whom there is no unpleasant association of authority or restraint, and the same advantage generally attends the place and time of meeting.

In addition to these peculiar and specified advantages, the Sunday-school partakes of those which are enjoyed by the common-school. It addresses itself to children of tender years, when impressions are easily and lastingly made, and it produces all the excitement and elasticity of spirit which are necessary to improvement, without any of that emulation or rivalry which is often encouraged in daily schools. These are among the ordinary fruits of Sunday-schools.

The value of the institution, and the wide extent of its influence must be learned from its history. By it the degraded have been elevated, enemies have been reconciled to each other, profligates have been reclaimed, drunkards reformed, and infidels converted to the faith of the gospel. By the blessing of God upon these schools, they have brought order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. Domestic peace has been restored, the altar of domestic worship reared, the Sabbath consecrated, religious congregations gathered, and churches of the living God planted, so that in many solitary places where no voice was, notes of joy and gladness, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody are now heard.

Who will not say that an agency which has brought forth such fruits as these, is worthy to be invigorated and enlarged till it shall embrace every human habitation and every human heart?

§ 2. *How to determine where a Sunday-school is needed.*—To determine whether a Sunday-school is needed in a given place, we have only to ascertain whether there are any persons of suitable age and character to attend one. If so, let an individual who knows something of the design and use of the

instruction (which is, in a word, to lead the young to study, understand, believe, and obey the Bible) visit the children, and invite them, with the permission of their parents and guardians, to attend. Peculiar kindness and prudence are necessary in the discharge of this duty, and sometimes it may be best to commence without any such preliminary measures, merely giving notice of time and place, and inviting such to come as may feel disposed.

Sometimes a printed notice has been left at each house in the neighbourhood, stating the time and place of opening the school; and inviting parents to attend and bring their children. In other instances tracts have been circulated, or the preacher or some agent in the vicinity has addressed the people, and prepared their minds for the measure.* An intelligent superintendent in Massachusetts mentions "that the ladies engaged in the monthly tract distribution have rendered much assistance in collecting scholars." It is very properly observed, that "they have the best opportunities of explaining the nature and object of Sabbath-schools, of which, very many, even in the best favoured parts of New England, are almost entirely ignorant."

§ 3. *Who are to be consulted and employed.*—It may be well to state explicitly in this connexion,

* A premium tract of twelve pages, "on the Advantages of Sunday-schools," is published by the *American Tract Society*, and may be had at any of their depositories at \$1 per 100 copies; and the *American Sunday-school Union* will furnish for gratuitous distribution, several pamphlets on this subject, prepared by clergymen and others, of various denominations, setting forth the advantages, and obviating popular objections to Sunday-schools. These may be circulated with happy effect, a week or two before the school is opened.

that in all arrangements for the establishment and support of a Sunday-school in connexion with any particular church, one of the earliest steps should be, to obtain the counsel and aid of the minister, and other constituted authorities of that church. The design of the system being, as we have seen, chiefly to form the religious character of the children, (who, in the case supposed, will hereafter compose the church and congregation,) it is not to be presumed that the ministers and people of God will look with indifference, nor indeed, without deep interest upon such an enterprise.*

* The part which ministers are bound to take in this matter is well defined, and the duty eloquently urged in the following remarks from the pens of two or three of their brethren.

“A Sunday-school connects itself with almost every department of the ministerial system. It is often, instrumentally, an adult school. Parents, in not a few instances, have been taught to read by their children, thus qualified to instruct them. Suitable applications may also be often sent to them from the Sunday-school, besides the scriptural lessons, which, when explained with affectionate and interesting simplicity, will form part of the childlike conversation in the family circle. And thus we speak extensively through this attractive channel, and, with a force of interest which no other system could convey. The school thus enters into almost every family as a medium of instruction. *It is indeed the lever whose force is felt over the whole parish.*”

The suggestion is then made that “the plan, arrangement, and illustrations of sermons might be profitably directed with special reference to subsequent examination in the Sunday-school.” And the author observes, “one of the most difficult, yet, most interesting characters of the minister, is a teacher of babes, childlike in the treatment of children, to drop the truth into narrow-mouthed understandings, and thereupon to graft exhortations which may draw the catechumens into declared resolutions of piety. This is one of the things where

It is important to enlist as much interest and sympathy as practicable, at the outset. We are told that most of the houses in Russian villages are built of wood; and hence, if a fire break out it is almost certain that dreadful havoc will ensue, unless great promptitude and energy are employed to extinguish

abundance of wisdom and prudence may be demonstrated.”—
[Rev. Charles Bridges.]

“In observing on this subject,” says another, “I beg leave respectfully to say to ministers of the gospel of every denomination, that I scarcely know a pastoral duty of higher responsibility than to lend your utmost aid and influence to give efficiency, and a right direction to Sunday-schools within the limits of your parishes. A mightier moral engine has not been set in operation for ages. It affords to the faithful pastor greater facilities for the instruction of his people than any thing before discovered. By their means we enjoy the assistance of ten, twenty, thirty, or forty persons every Sabbath, earnestly and diligently engaged in giving religious instruction to the children of our charge, and giving it to multitudes whom our instructions would never have reached. And our young men and women are in a train of useful learning and improvement, rendering them more capable of being useful and respectable members of the church, and qualifying them to teach their families the way of life.

“And, here, I beg leave to state, that the American Sunday-school Union prescribe no standard of doctrine to the schools in their connexion. Their object is to bring their scholars to a knowledge of the BIBLE, the great repository of all religious truth. But it behoves the pastors of the churches to see to it, that nothing is inculcated upon the youth under their charge, which is inconsistent with that form of doctrine which he himself esteems and teaches to be truth. And it is a fact, too well known to be here repeated, that the catechisms of different evangelical churches have been frequently and willingly used as books of instruction, whenever this has been requested by parents, or others having the right to direct the religious instruction of children. And if this long approved method of instruction has been less attended to than its importance demands, the rea-

the flames at the commencement. But the people are ignorant; scarcely one in a hundred can read, and any written or printed directions on this subject would be useless. Now, to remedy this, the head man of the village orders to be painted on the door

son may be found in the diversity of religious denominations, which are frequently mingled in the same school; or, where this does not exist, in the inattention of the clergy to the schools established within the precincts of their pastoral charges. For, I may venture to affirm, that no evangelical pastor will ever meet with any difficulty in having the catechism or form of doctrine adopted by his own church, inculcated on the youth of his own parish. But in schools unconnected with the pastoral charge of any minister, of which there are many, the superintendents and teachers must of course pursue that mode of religious instruction which to them appears best: and as long as the books of instruction used in Sunday-schools are published, and may be examined by all who feel an interest in this subject, there can be no danger that error will be circulated by means of this institution.”—[Rev. Dr. Alexander.]

And another appeals to his brethren in the following terms:

“Ministers of Christ! How much the prosperity of this glorious cause depends upon your faithfulness, upon your influence! To say that it cannot go on ‘unto perfection’ without you, is almost to say, that if it fails, or languishes, you must answer for it. On you it devolves to *teach the teachers*, as well as the children of your respective charges, to counsel and encourage them in their arduous duties, to visit all the people in your congregations, and persuade them, if possible, to send every child to the Sabbath-school, as soon as it is capable of receiving religious instruction, and to exercise a general supervision over this blessed system of benevolence.

“While the control of the American Sunday-school Union, in all its vast operations, is very properly placed exclusively in the hands of laymen, they expect, they ask, I might almost say, they *implore* your zealous and powerful co-operation. Surely, my beloved brethren, you will not disappoint them. You will not stand aloof from so glorious an enterprise.”—[Rev. Dr. Humphrey.]

of every house what the people of that house are to bring, in case of emergency. On one door is painted a ladder, on another a water bucket, and on another an axe, &c.; and on certain muster-days every man appears with his apparatus, to show that all things are ready. Thus the whole strength of the people is secured for the public good.

So it is with the Sunday-school. It gives something to every man to do; perhaps no kindred institution offers more various employment for diversities of gifts than this. To seek out new scholars and bring them to the school; to inquire after absentees, and reclaim wanderers; to form classes for mutual instruction; to visit schools and families; to attend to the clothing and comfort of the destitute, and to the general welfare and safety of the whole charge, are items in a long catalogue of services to be rendered.

It has seemed to us that many persons of both sexes, in full health, and abounding in all the essential qualifications of useful and successful labourers, are standing all the day *idle* in the midst of fields ready for the reaper, while their eyes are surveying the immense harvest which spreads beyond, and in every portion of which are found other idlers gazing with listless wonder like themselves.

In many villages and cities of our country, a great number of persons are found who are proper subjects of infant, Sunday, or adult school instruction. They are so situated that a very little skilful effort would bring them all under it; but those who should be employed particularly, and (for the time being) exclusively, in this object, are either cumbered with so many other things as to prevent special attention to this, or any thing else in particular;

or they have some vast scheme in mind, on which they waste all their energy, and accomplish nothing at last.

We venture to propose to such persons what seems to us a "more excellent way." It is simply to determine what their time, talents, &c. will enable them to do, and then to form a plan of proceeding suited to their circumstances, and to the necessities of those around them, and execute that plan thoroughly, and with all their might.

The workman that needeth not to be ashamed, puts in his sickle at whatever corner of the field the master of the vineyard has placed him. His eyes look right on; his eyelids look straight before him, and all his ways are established. You see his progress only by the sheaves that rise behind him, and while another is determining where to begin, he has done, and perhaps received his wages.

If, however, but a single individual is disposed to engage in active duty, the opening of the school need not be delayed. The saving truths of the gospel have often been taught by one individual to many hundreds of all ages and characters, and under circumstances which no Sunday-school teacher in our country is likely to encounter; generally, however, a number of persons are found willing to engage; and their attention is soon called to the choice of a leader or *superintendent*, of whose office and duties we shall treat in another place.

§ 4. *The place of keeping a Sunday-school.*—The band of labourers being organized, the next point is as to the *place* of opening the school. If there is neither school-house, church, nor vestry, nor session-room, nor lecture-room, nor conference-room, nor private house, nor hall, nor barn, nor

factory, nor mill-house, nor distillery (which have all been used more or less for the purposes of a Sunday-school) to be had, still there may be a Sunday-school, at least upon the mild and dry Sabbaths of the year. The highway and the open heaven belong to us all, and may be used by all, duly regarding the rights and conveniences of others.

In the selection of a place (where a choice is offered) several things should be considered; such as the probable number to be accommodated; the vicinity of those who are expected to attend; the access to it, and, at the same time, to a place of worship; the quiet and retirement of the school; the favourable or unfavourable associations that may attend it, &c. &c.

It is unquestionably the duty of every congregation to provide suitable accommodations for its Sunday-schools. In the infancy of the institution such a suggestion would scarcely have been entertained, but now that all Christendom bears testimony to its value and importance, it is time to provide the aids and appliances which are needed for its permanence and efficiency. Among these one of the first is *a suitable room within its own control*. In all kinds of education little things are of great consequence; and these cannot receive proper attention if the place of education is as appropriate to twenty other purposes as to the purpose of a school. There is no doubt, we presume, that the advantages of a good Sunday-school more than compensate for any expense which is required, in this form, to make it completely successful; and we hope the time will come soon when it will be admitted that if an appropriate edifice is requisite to the existence and success of a congregation, a suitable

room is not less so to the maintenance and prosperity of its Sunday-schools. "A parish cannot study its own interests better, or more successfully apply the wisdom of the children of this world to spiritual ends, than by early attention to the foundation, encouragement, and *perpetuation* of its Sunday-schools; and we need not say, that nothing can better insure their continuance than the provision of a building for its use,—a local habitation as well as a name."*

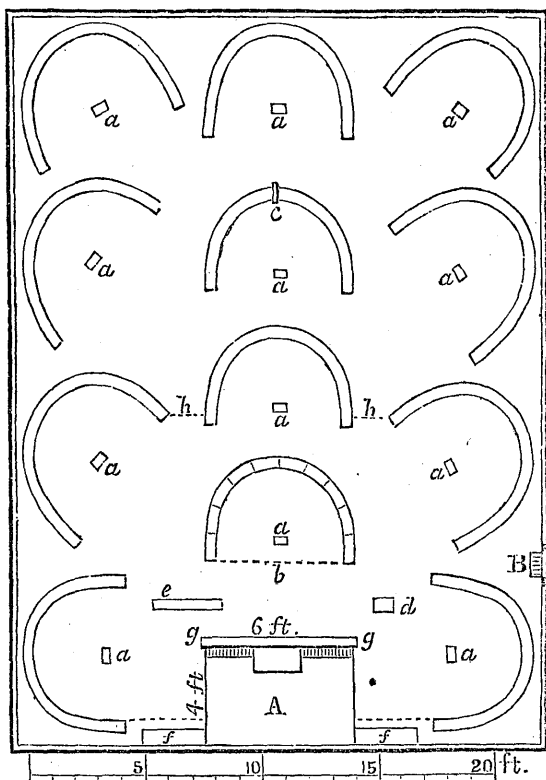
When the number of pupils is sufficient to justify it, two rooms, one for males and one for females, should be furnished. These should be of proper size; easy of access; well lighted and ventilated; in an airy and comfortable situation. It is now very common to build churches with rooms in the basement for lectures, schools, &c., and honourable instances might be mentioned of congregations whose place of worship would not admit of such apartments, and who have, therefore, erected a building expressly for the purpose.†

The following diagram represents the general

* Family Visiter.*

† In the upper part of the city of New Orleans, an important Sunday-school was likely to fail for want of a suitable room. To remove this difficulty, four persons purchased a lot and built a house upon it, at an expense of \$1600, devoting it forever to this use. It was also in the plan to erect on the same lot a comfortable dwelling for a Sunday-school missionary. If not thus occupied, the rent of the school-room for a week-day school was to go to support a Sabbath-school, and the rent of the dwelling to support a missionary.

A very liberal sum has been expended in England within ten years past for the erection of permanent buildings for Sunday-schools, which would also serve for infant and daily schools.



A. Superintendent's desk. B. Door.

a. Teacher's seat with desk. d. The stove. e. Bench for new pupils. ff. Book cases. gg. Seats for visitors. hh. Passages eighteen inches wide.

Benches ten inches wide, and made into two parts, united with a hinge as at c. They will seat ten pupils.

The seats should average twelve inches from the floor.

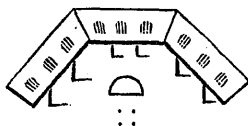
plan of a room for this purpose, twenty-eight feet by twenty-two. It is estimated by some that for one hundred children, a room should be at least thirty feet square and ten feet high; while others are of the opinion that the least dimensions which can be consistent with health and comfort are, for

30 pupils	22 feet by	20
50 "	36 "	25
70 "	35 "	30
100 "	46 "	34

and with a ceiling of ten feet.

If the room is used for no purpose requiring the removal of the seats, they should be fastened to the floor to prevent the noise and confusion of moving or overturning them. The backs should be fifteen inches high, with a slope of about two inches. The uprights or standards for the back should be made in five or seven pieces for each form. Each should be two inches wide, and should be firmly attached to the edge of the seat, so as to secure a proper balance. The circular slat for the back may be a thin band of white wood let in at or near the top of the standards.

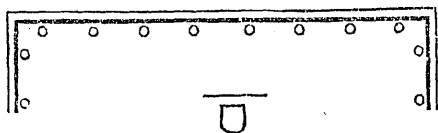
Another form of seating a room is represented in the following diagram :



The seat is in three pieces of three feet each, with legs and backs, so fitted as to make, when united, one firm and safe seat for nine pupils. The advantages of this method are, that the seat may be more readily made to fit the number of the class, and that the floor may be entirely cleared in a few minutes, if

the room is wanted for another purpose. The teacher has a chair and desk, both moveable at pleasure.

A Sunday-school of three hundred children has been taught comfortably in a room sixty by twenty feet, furnished with benches of the following form :



A school arranged in classes and taught orally, each class by its appropriate teacher, needs a room fitted up expressly for the purpose. The body of a house of public worship, or a lecture or conference-room divided into seats or pews, is evidently ill-adapted to the instruction of a school, unless the seats are provided with shifting backs like the seats in railroad cars. Probably circular forms will conveniently accommodate more persons in the same space than any other. There should always be a proper support for the back of the pupil, and the width, height, &c., should be adapted to his health and comfort, as well as his present ease and quiet.

§ 5. *Clothing of poor children.* In collecting or replenishing a school, children are sometimes found without suitable clothing. Raikes used to say, "If they can loiter about without shoes, and in a ragged coat, they may as well come to school in that garb and learn something good. All that I require are clean hands, a clean face, and the hair combed. If they have no clean shirt, let them come in a dirty one." The children of our country will not come to school at all, unless they can come with decent apparel. Provision is made for

the destitute in various ways; sometimes by the teachers, sometimes by the contributions of the church, and often by an independent society formed for this purpose. It is important that each case claiming assistance should be carefully examined, to prevent imposition, and at the same time every degree of publicity should be avoided, if possible, lest offence should be given, and the ultimate object be defeated.

It should be impressed on the minds of children that clean and tidy clothes, though patched, ill-fitted, and out of fashion, will always make them appear respectable, and all invidious comparisons on this subject must be severely reprov'd. To do this effectually, the love of dress should be studiously and religiously resisted; and the example of the officers and teachers of the school, male and female, should be in strict conformity to this principle. We once knew a teacher whose means of indulgence were abundant, but who conscientiously abstained from the purchase or use of any ornament or article of dress, which she believed could attract the notice of her class, or excite in them a single improper emotion. To this point she had regard in all her apparel.

Some years ago, a school in western Pennsylvania adopted the following plan:

In order that the children of the poor people might not be discouraged from attending by the inferiority of their dress, the superintendent and teachers resolved to take their own children to the school in the plainest and coarsest clothes, and even without shoes in the summer, in order that their external appearance might not be superior to that of the other children. It succeeded; but the success of a measure does not always prove its expediency.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE ORGANIZATION OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

§ 1. *Different classes of Sunday-schools—Local schools.*—Supposing a company of children to be collected ready for organization : the first inquiry is, what *kind of organization* is best fitted to the circumstances of the case ; for, as we have said, the institution is capable of all necessary modifications, to meet the various circumstances of society,

I. *Local, or neighbourhood schools.*—These have been found of great value in the outskirts of large towns, and in scattered neighbourhoods of the country, where the children and youth either from necessity or choice forego the privileges of the Sabbath, spend the holy day in idleness or sport, and grow up in utter ignorance of the truths of the Bible. They are held in school-houses or private rooms as may be most convenient. No one can estimate the amount of good which may be done, if a single, faithful, intelligent teacher was stationed from Sabbath to Sabbath, in the midst of every group of a dozen children, that could be collected in neighbourhoods so remote from the principal school as to make it impracticable for them to attend. And even in large cities a vast amount of religious instruction could be carried into the dwelling-places of those who have neither inclination nor motive to go or send abroad for it.

These schools are often taught in the intervals of the principal school or schools in the place. Sometimes the main, or central school is taught in the morning, and at noon the teachers divide into two or three bands, and visit as many distant sections of the town as need their aid. It is well in all such cases to employ as much assistance as we can in the vicinity of the school; and often, after a few weeks or months, the foreign assistance may be withdrawn entirely, and the school be sustained by the neighbours. In many cases, a school thus established has proved the germ of a flourishing church.

The establishment of local schools would furnish employment for many persons who excuse their inactivity on the ground that they see no way or opportunity for them to do good. Perhaps no better way of awakening their sympathies and energies could be suggested than the attempt to plant a new Sunday-school in a destitute neighbourhood.*

* Two or three sketches from actual experience may serve at once to illustrate the method of establishing such schools, and to encourage the attempt.

"During the summer of 1829," says one, "I took up my residence in one of our eastern villages. I learned from a friend that there were several destitute places in the neighbourhood. There was one in particular where a Sabbath-school had never shed its hallowed influence around them. Their children had never been but slightly, and many of them not at all, instructed in the way of salvation. All were growing up in moral darkness. From the accounts we had received we expected opposition, and prepared to meet it. But the Lord opened a door for us. 'He made them willing in the day of his power.' During the summer our school prospered. We indeed found deplorable ignorance, but at the same time a degree of attention for which I looked in vain in my class at

If there is any doubt as to the necessity of some more extensive effort for the children of remote neighbourhoods in the country, and for destitute portions of the population of our cities, a very par-

the village. With joy we marked the attention and improvement of our pupils, and endeavoured to reach the hearts of the parents. The Holy Spirit gave efficacy to our feeble efforts, and a work of grace commenced, in the progress of which, many souls were born of God."

"In a little schoolhouse, three miles from the centre of the town," says another, "two of us are in the habit of holding a religious meeting, as well as a Sabbath-school; and we have now in progress a revival of religion. The neighbourhood has long been noted for its wickedness, though there are a few pious people there who have sustained the school. Among the individuals who are, as we hope, born again, not more than one or two are found, who have not *been concerned* in the school as teachers or pupils."

An intelligent superintendent in Massachusetts says.

"We have this season established local schools in the factory villages, and in various other parts of the town. Many children in our New England towns live at a distance from the church, and have no means of conveyance to it; consequently, schools must either be carried near them, or they must remain destitute."

In a manufacturing village of one of the Northern States, the system of local schools was introduced in 1831. In the course of the season, seven such schools were established, generally at schoolhouses, varying in numbers from twenty to one hundred. These, together with the school at the church, embrace more than six hundred scholars and teachers.

The course pursued was this: individuals were told of the need of such schools, and were requested to engage in establishing them. They were then requested to visit every family in a certain district, and inquire whether they wished a school established in the neighbourhood. In every instance they met with much better success than they anticipated. The poor good people who had not the means to get their children

tial inquiry will remove it. The command of our divine Master is, "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage." Sunday-school teachers are the very class of

the church (and there are many) were rejoiced at the privilege of having their children able to attend punctually upon the Sabbath-school. And those who cared not for the spiritual welfare of their children, were generally willing and sometimes anxious to have them attend. Many parents were gratified that their children were to have interesting books to read. It was mysterious to some, that teachers were willing to come out every Sabbath and instruct their children, and furnish them with books to read, and all this for nothing; they could not account for it. At any rate, they concluded the teacher had no selfish end in view, that he really wished to benefit their children, and so were glad to send them. When the Sabbath came, the visitors, together with one or two assistants, took their bundle of books from the Sunday-school library, and proceeded to the place appointed for the schools, where they found the children assembled. Often, at the close of the schools, which likewise included adult scholars, who recited the same lessons with the children, conference meetings were held, sometimes by the pastor, who found the people assembled, and their minds prepared for worship; and in one district the result was a revival.

The following statement is by a clergyman residing on the Hudson river.

"The neighbourhood for whose benefit we have been labouring, is one that had been almost entirely neglected. They live from a mile to four or five remote from what may be called the settled part of the county, in the woods. Extreme poverty, many years ago, drove them together upon a barren section of land thrown out to the commons as unfit for cultivation. Here, after making a small clearing, they have erected log cabins of the rudest kind. Many of them have no floors except the cold and naked earth; no stoppings between the logs; a straw thatched roof; no floor overhead; without windows, and having a single door for entrance. The furniture of these wretched cabins I will not attempt to describe,

persons on whom this duty especially, and most appropriately devolves. They are capable of *individualizing* the invitation of the gospel, and on saying to each man, woman, and child, "Come, for all things are now ready."

and will only say that it corresponds with the miserable hovel that scarcely afford their inmates shelter from the wind and the storm.

"Under such circumstances of poverty and distress lived thirty or forty families. At the time our school was established, I believe but one individual among them all could read or write. Some of them had Bibles which were given them, laid up very carefully, and seemingly regarded with a great degree of veneration. Occasionally their only reader was called in to make known to them their contents. At such times, I am informed, it was not unusual for several families to come together, and sit and hear with a great deal of attention.

"The children, as a matter of course, were growing up in ignorance and vice, knowing as little of the Being who made them, or the world to which they were destined, as the children of the Hindoos or Hottentots. In the summer they were seen upon the Sabbath, as well as other days in the week, scattered over the woods in search of berries. In the winter they were almost naked and starving. A very unpromising field for a Sabbath-school. But the Saviour who preached the gospel to the poor would certainly forbid that these poor children should be neglected.

"The first thing to be done was to search the children out by visiting, and obtain the consent of their parents that they would send them, if a school was established. In this we were generally successful; very few gave us a refusal. The next step, which was by far the most formidable, was to clothe them. This was done by the females of my church; some of whom acted as explorers through the woods in quest of these ragged and almost naked children. The next thing was to provide suitable books.

"We collected about one hundred and twenty children. The greater part of these, as I have before observed, commenced in the alphabet. Before the school closed, which was about the mid-

In some schools the teachers have colonized—that is, two or three or more of them, who have enterprise and zeal enough for the purpose, have left, for a time, the schools they have assisted to build

dle of October, a considerably large proportion could read in the Testament, and perhaps all could spell in two syllables. The proficiency of the children in learning was certainly remarkable.”

“I believe a very great change has been produced upon their moral character. They have been led to regard the Sabbath, and to feel in some measure their obligation to keep it holy ; incipient habits of vice have been checked, and in many cases, it may be, wholly eradicated. A foundation has been laid or commenced at this all-important season of life for moral culture, and for divine truth to exert its saving influence.

“One of the children, a girl of about thirteen years of age, has become hopefully pious and united with my church. Nor has the good been confined to the children. It has reflected upon the parents. I have preached very frequently in the neighbourhood, and a more attentive people I have rarely witnessed. A number, we believe, have been born into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Several have united with the Baptist church, a number more with mine, while others are still expecting to unite with us. A very great change, owing to the Sabbath-school, combined with the preaching of the gospel, has been produced upon the whole of this hitherto neglected people.

“Now, although I believe that but few neighbourhoods can be found so destitute and wretched throughout the land ; yet certainly there are thousands sufficiently so to stimulate those who have it in their power to search them out, and carry to them the heaven-born charity of Sabbath-schools. Until this is attempted and actually accomplished, there will, notwithstanding all that has or shall be done for the instruction of our children and youth, still remain many dark places where vice will grow up unchecked and unmolested. There will still be many stagnant and polluted fountains that will constantly pour forth their baneful streams upon the verdant and fruitful portions that surround them. Certain it is, our land can never feel in all its parts the holy influence of the gospel, nor become

up, and which now have strength to stand and flourish without them ; have gone to some destitute place in the city or town in the neighbourhood of factories, mills, furnaces, groceries, salt-works,

the light of the world, until this work is accomplished. There are enough to plant and sustain Sunday-schools in our cities and large villages ; but who will obey the command of the Saviour, and go out into the highways and the hedges ? Who will imitate the Redeemer of man in preaching the gospel to the poor, and those ready to perish ? Who will gather the wandering, starving lambs into his fold ?”

A clergyman in Connecticut states as follows :—

“ When I commenced my ministerial duties in this parish, the Sunday-school was in a low and declining state ; only a mere handful attended. There was no life or energy, and but little, if any system observed. The school was held between the services at noon, and embraced only half an hour. It was also about the season when the school broke up for the winter. The prospect appeared dark and disheartening. As soon as possible, I called the Sabbath-school committee and friends of the cause together, to adopt some efficient measures to awaken the minds and exertions of the church to this object. I proposed to my people to let the school between the services drop, and have four or five schools in different sections of the parish on Sabbath evenings, to bring in old and young, parents and children, and have the whole congregation, as far as was practicable, either scholars or teachers ; to appoint for each school its own superintendent, and also a committee consisting of five or six of the most intelligent, active, and devoted members of the church as a visiting committee, who should visit each school every Sabbath evening to encourage the teachers, converse with the scholars on the subject of religion, see that all were supplied with books, and examine, before the school closed, the scholars and teachers on the lesson of the evening, and to make some useful suggestions and remarks of a spiritual nature. I also proposed, that after the children had gone over six or eight lessons of the Union Questions, to assemble them all in the church, where I would preach a sermon to them expressly, and have a public examination. And, I am happy to

mines, quarries, public improvements, &c., where the means of religious instruction are not enjoyed, and have gathered the children together and built up a substantial Sunday-school. At first they collected ten or fifteen only, and when the number increased, so that regular organization was necessary, all needed assistance was obtained; and when this school is permanently established, the same process is employed wherever the same necessity exists, until parents are without excuse for letting their children remain ignorant of the truths of the Bible. An instance is known to have occurred in the State of Ohio, where a few dollars were contributed, and a library procured, children flocked together from the neighbouring settlements, till the school-house in which they assembled could no longer contain them. To accommodate the children on account of distance as well as number, another school was commenced in a barn about a mile distant, as a branch of the first, and was supplied with books

say, that my plan was immediately adopted, and we have now five very flourishing schools, from one hundred and sixty-five to two hundred scholars, and near fifty teachers."

A Sunday-school missionary travelling in Ohio, mentions his being at the residence of a gentleman in the outskirts of the town, where he found one of the best Sunday-schools, and perhaps the very best in the county. It contained about thirty children, and was established about eighteen months previous, by a young lady, a member of the Episcopal church. There being no preaching in the neighbourhood, she concluded her Sabbaths could not be better employed than by collecting the children around her into one place, and teaching them the way to heaven. Having no one to help her, she commenced, and has continued the school entirely alone. For want of a more convenient place, the school was held at first in the loft of a distillery.

from the same library. The numbers continued to increase, and children came several miles to enjoy the privileges of the school. It continued to be divided, and subdivided, till five schools had grown up during the first year. Several instances of conversion occurred; and on the very spot where the first school was opened, a neat and commodious house for public worship was soon erected; an interesting and growing church organized, and a faithful minister of the new testament ordained to break to them the bread of life.

§ 2. *Sunday-schools in manufacturing villages.*—The increase of manufacturing villages all over our country makes it a subject of interesting inquiry what means of instruction are best fitted to their peculiar circumstances. While in many of these places the most liberal provision is made for religious and moral improvement, in others the young and the old are sadly neglected; sometimes the Sabbath is claimed as the only day for washing and mending clothes, writing letters to friends, reading newspapers or seeking amusement. Parents, compelled by their necessities, or instigated by motives of selfishness, cause their offspring, from their earliest years, to engage in the business of the manufactories. Forgetful of the fact, that “knowledge is better than a mine of wealth,” they allow them no time for the acquisition of a common education, much less of religious instruction. The holy Sabbath is hailed by this youthful throng, not as a season set apart for the worship of God, but as a day of relaxation from the severe and continued toils of the week, and is spent in slothful inactivity, or sports and recreations.

In addition to all this, there is not that opportu-

nity to affect the mass of the people by pastoral visits and by religious meetings on other days, which exists in other places. The Sunday-school has a proportionate importance. It is, in fact, the only means, besides preaching, which the pastor has of access to a large portion of his flock. There is a class of a manufacturing people who are under strong temptations to neglect the education of their children; and the influence of a Sabbath-school goes far to counteract such evil tendencies, and to promote general intelligence. The Sabbath-school is also peculiarly important, considered in its influence on many young people who are away from the regularities, restraints, and moral influences of the family and of home. It is a kind of substitute for family influence, of which many, in such places, suffer the want.*

* The following testimony from a clergyman residing in one of our largest manufacturing villages, is to the point:

"While there is peculiar need of a flourishing Sabbath-school among manufacturers, there are some peculiar facilities for enlisting adults, especially in them. Being brought together from different places, they are free from those local and family prejudices and jealousies which, in an agricultural place, might hinder the organization of classes and the usefulness of teachers. No difficulty has been experienced by us in finding competent teachers for adults, and such as have been acceptable to the scholars. Our most intelligent and serious young men and women have been members of the school. The great body of the church, and a majority of the congregation have taken their seats as teachers or learners.

"We have found the Sabbath-school library an important auxiliary. It has been instrumental, not only in providing the school with needful attractions, but it has scattered through the whole village, matter for constant religious reading.

"We have now a library which cost about two hundred dollars, in very active circulation, and if our school produced

One of the most flourishing schools of the kind under consideration was established twenty years since upon the Brandywine. (Delaware.) It was first suggested by a poor, illiterate, but pious weaver, and was kept in the upper story of a cotton-mill. The proprietors of the works, aware of the utility of the school, gave it every encouragement, and it was soon incorporated as "The Brandywine Manufacturer's Sunday-school for the improvement of children and adults of all sects and denominations." The hours of tuition were from eight A. M. to twelve and a half P. M. As many of the pupils had no opportunities of instruction elsewhere, writing and reading were taught in the Sunday-school, while all the children received instruction in those principles of the gospel upon which the great body of Christians agree. Such catechisms were taught as the parents or friends wished, and the Scriptures were used as

no other effect than to secure the reading of such and so many religious books by the people, its value would be incalculable.

"As there is a constant change of inhabitants in the place, constant care is needed to sustain the school. To secure this object it has been our custom to have a committee occasionally to visit every family in the place, to converse with the parents on the duty of sending their children, and to enlist both young and old in the enterprise. Respecting the results of our labours we are incompetent to speak—another day will declare them. Suffice it to say, that there has not been a time, until very recently, when it was not known that some of the people were under serious impressions. The church, which was formed at the commencement of my labours, has received more than two hundred members. How much instrumentality the Sabbath-school has exerted towards this state of things, we cannot precisely state. But it is a fact, that new conversions are almost invariably of those who were either members of the school before, or who immediately join it afterwards."

the great and only source of religious knowledge. To secure permanency to the school, the workmen allowed twenty-five cents to be deducted from the annual wages of every single man, and fifty cents from the wages of every married man. Ten cents for each scholar are also received from the State fund. Several daily schools in the vicinity owe their existence to this Sunday-school.

A journalist speaks of visiting a school of this kind where none of the pupils enjoyed the advantages of a common-school education, being confined in the factory both summer and winter. "The children are much engaged, and as an evidence, I would mention that I have seen, as I passed through the factory, their books frequently open, before them, so that they could read while at work. I have been delighted to see the lips of these children moving in studying their lessons, or in reading their books, which they receive from the Sunday-school library, while their hands were employed in labouring."

In a manufacturing village which we have visited, the wife of the superintendent of the mills was the teacher of an infant school of fifty or sixty children; while her husband had charge of the principal school, composed of youth and adults. At the signal given by the factory bell, the children and youth were seen, almost at the same moment, issuing from the dwellings of the workmen, neatly clad, with hymn books and testaments in their hands, all bending their steps towards wisdom's gates; and it deserves to be noted as an important item of Sunday-school history, that in August, 1833, a Sunday-school meeting was held at the manufacturing city of Lowell, (Massachusetts,) at

which were present upwards of two thousand pupils from eight schools of the place, connected with Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, and Congregational churches.

§ 3. *Sunday-schools in Prisons and Almshouses.*—It was once said, with truth, that it was very rare to find a convict who has ever been a regular attendant on a Sunday-school. Since the institution has extended, until it embraces almost every class of society, it is more common to find convicts who have been, at some period of their lives, members of a Sunday-school at least for a short season. We have been somewhat particular in our inquiries on this subject, and it is very unusual, indeed, to find a convict, of American birth, who has attended a Sunday-school regularly for a succession of years or even months. If their own statements are to be relied upon, (and they are usually most favourable to themselves,) they have generally been connected with one or more schools for a few weeks, and have gone to one or another without any care or inquiry by teachers or parents, and, let it be noted, that these are among the most hopeless of prison cases.

In most of the principal penitentiaries of the United States, religious instruction of some kind is afforded. Where the separate mode of discipline is adopted, as in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, it is not practicable to organize a proper Sunday-school; as one of the leading characteristics of this system is to keep the convicts ignorant of each other, even by sight. But those who are disposed to labour in this way, may, perhaps, find as useful employment for two or three hours in the instruction of seven or eight adult pupils, each one by himself,

as the same number associated in a class. Adults do not need, nor are they profited by the excitements of a school, and as a general rule, *the nearer we can approach to a system of private, personal, oral instruction, the more likely we are to secure the end of our labours, as religious teachers.*

In some of these institutions Sunday-schools were formerly sustained, but have been suspended from some cause; while in Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maryland, and perhaps some other States, regularly organized Sunday-schools have been sustained in the State penitentiaries, with various degrees of interest.

It is believed that the wardens and inspectors of these institutions, whatever may be their private opinion of the success of such labours, are uniformly friendly to any efforts of the kind that promise to be useful. In some of these schools, question books are used, and in others passages of the Bible are committed to memory during the week, and made the subject of instruction on the next Sabbath. The attendance of the convicts is generally voluntary, and the session continues from one to two hours. In some, reading and writing are taught on the Sabbath, and in others these branches are taught on the evenings of the week, by candlelight.

The general course of instruction in these schools must be modified by circumstances. Where the inmates have an opportunity to study the Bible, it might be well to furnish them with a short selected lesson to study, but most of the advantage must be derived from the oral instruction of the teacher adapted to the various attainments and states of mind of the individual members of his class.

Every teacher in such a school should be acquainted with the history of those he instructs, and should avail himself of every circumstance that may give force and point to his instructions. Nothing furnishes a stronger hold on the conscience of a wicked man than the early counsels, admonitions, and prayers of pious friends. Few convicts are found so hardened that an allusion to a kind and tender mother will not bring a tear.

With regard, however, to the numerous *jails* and *almshouses* in the country, there has been, and we believe still is, a deplorable lack of attention. With a very few gratifying exceptions, they are generally in a wretched condition, and are the fruitful sources of wickedness and crime. They are, in many respects, the nurseries of the larger institutions, and embrace within their pernicious influence nearly two hundred thousand persons, a large majority of whom have never received any religious education, and are still neglected by the community.

It is certainly practicable to alleviate the condition of many of this vast multitude, and the following suggestions *as to the mode*, are worthy of consideration.

1. In the neighbourhood of every almshouse, jail, &c., where there is no resident or stated religious teacher, let some one individual (or more) undertake, in the love of Christ, to commence the work without delay. Every thing, in an effort of this kind, will be found to depend, after all, mainly upon the spirit and labours of some *one* individual of common prudence.

2. Let him secure, as a preliminary, the approbation of the keeper and of the inmates of the establishment, which can usually be done without the least difficulty.

3. Let him next secure the coöperation of as many pious friends as are necessary to sustain a Sunday-school; and if none can be found, let him go on alone. Let him work single-handed and single-hearted. His example will provoke others to good works.

4. Let the effort be a *regular* one. No Sabbath should fail to bring with it the privileges of the holy day to this long-neglected class. If it is worth while to commence the effort, it is worth while to continue it without interruption.

5. The establishment might be visited occasionally on other days of the week, in order to keep up a friendly and profitable intercourse with its tenants.

6. Let none of the circumstances growing out of the hardened character of the persons confined, shake our confidence in the utility of the effort, or diminish our faith in its ultimate success.

§ IV. *Sunday-schools in private houses.*—Ten or fifteen years ago, the plan of establishing private Sunday-schools, or schools opened on the Sabbath under the direction, and at the expense of private individuals, was adopted in some contiguous villages of England. They were designed to supply the want of a suitable school room in a place easy of access to the neighbourhood, and especially for the small children of poor families. They were found of great use also in those districts where the principal schools were discontinued for the winter. Devout men and women, by opening their houses to one or two classes of children from neighbouring families, whether rich or poor, extended the blessings of the gospel to those who would have been otherwise destitute. It is said that the extensive introduction into our schools of the children of the pious and

wealthy, has excluded large numbers of the poorer classes, who are left in ignorance and vice ; and that a room fitted up in a private house, where there is no competition in dress or intellectual attainment, seems to offer the only attraction to children of this character. It is also said, that heads of families whose engagements prevent them from participating in Sunday-school efforts away from their own houses, have an opportunity of leading some to Jesus Christ whom they could not otherwise reach. The practice which prevails too extensively of persons neglecting the Sunday-school as soon as they are married, would then be without excuse, and parents might everywhere have a Sabbath-school of which their own household would form a part.

It is farther urged in favour of such schools that they present a favourable opportunity for the united operations of Christians of different denominations, and give useful occupation to many who would otherwise be unemployed. There is much weight in these considerations, and where the course proposed does not prejudice the interests of established schools, it may result in great good.

The mode of organizing and sustaining such schools must be substantially that adopted in ordinary Sunday-schools. The intercourse of the teachers and pupils may, perhaps, be more social, resembling that of a large family or boarding-school, but, without strict method or system no school can be permanent or prosperous under any circumstances.

§ V. *Adult schools*.—Many persons in our country have arrived at adult years without enjoying the privileges of a common education. It is certainly a dictate of benevolence that such should be

instructed in the elements of reading, so far at least as to introduce them to the knowledge of the Scriptures. There are many obstacles to the establishment and maintenance of schools for this purpose, but none which the spirit of our divine Master will not overcome.

There is a great population of domestic servants, apprentices, &c., in our cities who are shut out from places of worship, or denied the common privileges of the Sabbath, to whom such institutions would be invaluable and highly acceptable.

Undoubtedly much more might be done to interest adults in the study of the Scriptures. Let the most influential persons in the congregation act as agents among the morally destitute, and persuade them to form classes for mutual instruction. That the thing may be tried, let some of the most intelligent enlist in the cause and become members of the class. Perhaps they can communicate and receive more religious instruction in this way than in any other, and be much more likely to secure the attendance of the ignorant.

“Our adult classes,” says one, “usually associate together, and choose their own teacher; sometimes they select one of their own number to conduct the exercises. We find but little difficulty in obtaining competent teachers, persons of mature minds and Christian experience; such as have been convinced it is their duty. All our schools, adults and children, have the same lesson. The adults, however, usually have some subject connected with the lesson, given out to them by their teacher, on which they are to find proof texts.”

The plan of forming a Bible class in every school district, (or in suitable sections where no such dis-

trict division is recognised,) seems to have many advantages. A man of very ordinary common-school education, with a copy of the Bible, a Question Book, and the Union Bible Dictionary, could make a very useful Bible class teacher, if he has the right spirit and will apply himself. If it is desirable, however, to enjoy still higher advantages, let a few individuals unite and form themselves into a society or class, and place themselves under a competent instructor to introduce them into the more advanced branches of biblical science. In a few months we shall find, in such a class, a body of teachers well prepared to occupy the waste places which now pain the eye wherever it turns. It must be by some such cheap and simple instrumentality that this fearful deficiency of qualified teachers is supplied.

The organization of an entire congregation into a Sunday-school, embracing the members and officers of the church, and sometimes three or even four generations, has been found very useful in many places; and if superintended by the pastor, or some qualified person, must be productive of great improvement.

VI. *Infant Schools.* As these schools require a peculiar organization, it may be appropriate to treat of them in this connexion. They usually embrace children from eighteen months to six or seven years of age. Our present concern is with *Infant Sunday-schools*, and it may be safely assumed that children are capable of receiving oral instruction on the subject of religion as soon as on any other subject; not as readily, but as early. It will not be denied that little children are capable of receiving distinct notions in the way of instruction

about other things, much earlier than we commonly think of speaking to them of the things of God. Religious instruction is God's appointed way to their souls; and the things that "*are not seen*" have ideas connected with their nature, as well as "the things that are seen;" and the God of the Bible has so illustrated the spiritual, by the natural world, in his holy word, that the knowledge which a child acquires of earthly things, is made a sort of highway, along which he may be led to things heavenly and divine. Without divine influence the little child will not feel; neither will the full-grown man; but the great truths of revealed religion may be so borne into his infant mind by human agency, that he will perceive them as *really*, though not as *extensively* as the full-grown man. "It is a fact well adapted to humble us, that many of the leading doctrines of our holy religion are almost as much within the grasp of infancy as of manhood. The doctrine, for example, of the divine omnipresence, 'is high, we cannot attain unto it.' If we pursue it one step beyond the simple fact, we pass the boundary of human knowledge, and are lost. A being entirely and intensely present, at every point of the universe; and yet filling immensity! Who can take in the thought, or reconcile the relations of the subject? And yet, as a *practical* truth, it is one of the first principles which affects the soul of a little child. It is easily received; and once impressed, is never wholly lost. 'Thou God seest me,' becomes thenceforth a dissuasive from sin. We once saw a very little girl, of about four years old, whose religious instruction had been entirely neglected, receive, apparently for the first time, the idea of a God, and of his presence. She seemed

amazed,—delighted,—awed,—and her mind sprang upward towards the heavens, like a bird liberated from the thralldom of its cage.”

What we call first principles, such as the depravity of the heart, the salvation by Christ, the nature of repentance, and its necessity, &c., may be very early understood by a child in their naked and practical force, so far as is required to produce the proper impression on the soul. We need not here remind the Sunday-school teacher of the beautiful and very appropriate illustrations of these, and kindred subjects, found in the parables of the sacred Scriptures. Here truth, in the lucid language of nature, is directed to the heart by the hand which fashioned it. Nor are the abounding examples of real life in the Bible less striking, or less adapted to instruct the infant mind. Especially may we speak of the example of our divine Redeemer, who *embodied* in his life his holy law; and *shows forth* in his *actions* what he *tells* us in his *words*. We have heard of a little practical Christian, only a few years old, who was uncommonly exemplary and serious in her life; and on being asked how it came to pass that she behaved so well, she replied with great simplicity and wisdom, “before I do any thing, I think, how would Jesus do if he were in my place, and then I try to do like him.”

Our principle is, that the lower we go down towards the beginning of existence, the less do we find the soul preoccupied with evil influences; that the sooner the soul receives the truth of God the better; and we have proved already that it can find a very early entrance there. Infancy is the spring-time of being; the seedtime of eternal being; and while no universal rule can be applied to the vary

ing capacities of children, yet not a moment is to be lost that can be saved, and he may always be pronounced too late in beginning, who has not made the trial.

It has been remarked by President Edwards, that one great end of preaching the gospel is *impression*. Infancy we know is the season of impressions; then the feelings are tender beyond any other time of life. Then the memory is most susceptible, and at the same time most tenacious. Then the conscience is not seared; and so soon as divine truth can be introduced, it knows the voice of God.

We may add that all those principles of action within us to which the word of God appeals, such as the desire of happiness, the love of approbation, the sense of shame, of gratitude, and the fountain of hopes and fears, are opening in the soul of the little child, and may be successfully reached by the faithful teacher. At every age, God's grace alone can save the soul; but at this, if we may speak so, divine power is less resisted, and divine truth more kindly entertained.

We have enlarged on this topic because the importance of the system, as such, seems to be undervalued by the friends of Christian instruction in this country, and one reason may be, that the care of daily infant schools has so often been committed to incompetent persons.

It is desirable that every infant school should be conducted in a separate apartment, and by a teacher of piety and intelligence. In fitting up a room, (which may be done at an expense of five dollars,) reference should be had to two or three prominent points. 1. Every child should have for his seat at

least one foot of clear room, and it should be from six to ten inches in height from the floor. 2. The seats should be so arranged as to give the best opportunity for the teacher to be seen and heard by each pupil with the least trouble to them and to him. 3. The accommodations should be such as will favour the order and quiet of all parties.

Religious instruction only should be given. The first step on the ladder of knowledge should be attended with pleasant associations. Scripture pictures may be explained, and questions put to the pupils, by answers to which they shall explain the pictures to each other. Simple hymns should also be repeated by them, and figurative expressions and illustrations opened to them. Singing is also a delightful exercise to such little children, whether physically or morally regarded. Occasionally they should rise and sit alternately and in quick succession, making at the same time some simple and regular motions of the hands and arms. This is a necessary discipline for maintaining good order, and will be found a ready means of recalling their attention at all times. It also relieves their constraint, and gratifies a love of motion which no discipline can or ought to repress. It is only to be regulated or directed. No formal recreations should be allowed in an infant Sunday-school, though the posture should be changed the more frequently, and the lesson be abridged to compensate for it.

The following simple but judicious directions on the subject of teaching an infant Sunday-school are from an experienced instructor.

“Before you put any of your scholars into the Testament, I recommend you to consider in the first place whether they are able to read the words

at first sight without stopping to spell them ; and, secondly, whether they have been long enough in the habit of hearing the Testament read to be a little acquainted with the language and the history beforehand ; and, if this is the case, I think I can promise you that they will get on nicely with the new task. But you will find it a good plan to let them read only about six or eight verses at a time ; hear them at least twice over ; and then, whilst they still have the books open in their hands, ask them questions on every verse in this manner :—

“ Suppose they had been reading the first six verses of the eleventh chapter of John, then ask them,

Who was sick ?

What was his name ?

What was the name of the town where Mary and her sister Martha lived ?

What had Mary done to the Lord Jesus ?

Whose brother was Lazarus ?

What message did his sisters send to Jesus ?

When Jesus heard it, what did he say ?

Whom did Jesus love ?

When Jesus heard that he was sick, did he go to see him directly, or did he wait a short time ?

How long did he abide in the same place ?

What is meant by ‘ he abode ?’

“ I will now take another example from the tenth chapter of the same gospel. After the children have read their six verses, it would be well to tell them to look at the end of the last chapter, and see who was speaking, that they may know who it was that said, ‘ I say unto you.’ And when they have found it out, let them look again to see who it was that Jesus was speaking to ; and if they cannot find

it, show them the fortieth verse, where they may see that it was 'some of the Pharisees.' Then ask them these questions:—

What did Jesus say to the Pharisees in the first verse of the chapter you have been reading?

Then can you tell me which way the thief and robber enters into the sheepfold? Does he enter by the door? (Answer, No: but he climbs up some other way.)

Then who is it that enters by the door?

Now do you know what a shepherd is?

Who opens to the shepherd?

Who hear his voice?

Whose sheep does he call by name, and lead them out?

When he putteth forth his own sheep, where does he go?

And what do the sheep then do?

Whose voice do they know?

“When a little child first comes to school, he should be left for a time to look about him. You should afterwards have your eyes upon him, and lead him to join with the others by little and little. As soon as he has got over his shyness, and you have made friendship with him by showing him any little kindness, you will be able to get him to answer when he is spoken to, which is one point gained, as they are apt to stand quite still when asked a question. Very simple things will do to begin with, such as, whether he has any brothers or sisters,—whether he nurses the baby, and the like.

“The habit of answering such questions without fear, will prepare the way for you to talk with him when there is a suitable time for it, with a view to find out what notions he has formed, or what he

has been taught respecting his heavenly Father and his religious duties; and if he has got wrong notions, to set him right; always taking care to teach nothing but what is plainly set forth in the Holy Scriptures; and that the child is made to feel that this is a more serious matter than his common lessons.

“I have often thought that it is of great importance that we should teach the infant mind to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart; and if I were speaking to my scholars about it, I think I should do it in words something like these: ‘Do not you find that when you wish to behave well, and to gain the love of your teachers, it sometimes costs you a great deal of trouble? Do you not feel almost as if you could not help doing what is wrong sometimes, because you are so used to it? And if you try to leave off saying bad words, or getting into a passion, do not you find it very hard to leave off these bad ways? Now it is the power of sin and the power of evil habits, that hinders you: and it is in vain to try and get over it of yourselves; for you cannot do it, you never will do it, unless you pray for help. Jesus Christ can set you free from the power of sin. He loves to help children; and he will make you good, and gentle, and holy, if you ask him, and are willing to be taught by his Holy Spirit. And now listen while I tell you more about this. He will make your heart heavy when you have done wrong, or even when you are *going* to do some wicked thing; and if you are willing to mind the teachings of his Spirit in your heart, then he will give you power to conquer your evil habits, and to begin to lead a new life. And when you are living this new life, you

will try to behave as well when your teachers or parents are *not* with you, as when they *are*.'

"In giving religious instruction to little children, we must beware of tiring them. They are not always in a sufficiently serious disposition; and often, after listening with pleasure for a short time, they will show by their restlessness, that they want some employment for the mind, besides the mere act of listening.

"Never ask them a question which you have not good reason to think they can answer properly. If you take care to observe this rule for yourselves, you may then lay down another rule for *them* to mind, which is, Never to guess. If these two rules are observed, and you tell them to say, '*I do not know*,' whenever they really cannot answer, you will be spared the vexation of seeing your scholars stand stock still when you ask them a question.

"It is important that the first notions a child has of his heavenly Father, are correct and scriptural. His displeasure at sin, his watchful care, and his readiness to forgive may be explained by reference to the conduct and emotions of a kind earthly parent. We need not say how irreverent, unscriptural, and dangerous are all representations of God, as the 'good man' indistinction from the devil, as the 'bad man.' Every rule and every example on this subject should be in strict accordance with Scripture, or it is unsafe.

"Let us, then, watch for times when they are enjoying their little comforts, their food, their warm clothing, the blazing fire, or the cheering sunshine, and at these times let us tell them who it is that sends them these comforts, and let us thus try to

make them feel a degree of love and gratitude to God. And, at the same time, a fear of offending him; for *the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.*

“ You will be very careful to teach them to be dutiful to their parents, kind to their brothers and sisters, civil to everybody, respectful to their teachers, and kind to the old, and those who are blind, deaf, lame, or in any way deformed; and not only so, but when you know that they have been doing any thing amiss, you will talk to them, and strive to make them feel that they have offended God; and that they must be sorry for having done so, and must pray to God to forgive them, for Jesus Christ’s sake.

“ But after all the pains we can take to give them a knowledge of religion, it will not reach their hearts, unless it be accompanied by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. If, then, it is God who giveth the increase, ought we not to be earnest and constant in prayer for so great a blessing?

“ It is also very needful to watch, as well as to pray, not only for the sake of keeping our own peace with God, but also for the good of those we have the care of. Their minds are so little opened, that they have very imperfect ideas of the meaning of those words which express the good or bad dispositions of the mind; and it is more from the way in which they hear us use these words, than from the explanations in books that they will learn them.

“ I have observed no point of conduct which has given more offence to parents, or destroyed the teacher’s authority more, than the habit of scolding, and unjustly accusing the children. A short, yet serious and calm reproof, now and then given, does

much more good than a great many such sentences as these : ‘ Well ! of all the trying children I ever met with, you are the worst ; I may talk till I am tired, and you mind me no more than if I was speaking to the wall.’ In truth, it often happens, that when we are vexed, we say something which is not quite true, and may just undo all the good which we have been trying to do ; for the children are sure to see it, and lay it to heart, and remember it long after we have forgotten it. Let us, therefore, strive to watch and pray, lest we enter into *this* temptation.

“ I will now mention another error which teases the children : it is, the being more strict at one time than at another. They are vexed to be chid at one time for doing the very same thing which they are allowed to do at another time. It therefore seems best not to make too many rules : but never to let any known rule be broken, without noticing it.

“ In the management of children, we should always keep in view, that they have souls which will never die ; that their natures are evil ; and that nothing but the Holy Spirit of our Redeemer can change their hearts : ‘ Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ When we think of this, it will make us very *tender* of them ; we shall feel for them in their struggles with their evil hearts ; and, instead of being very angry with them when they are naughty, we shall be sorry for them, and earnestly wish to make them feel sorry too. We shall be fearful of treating them harshly, lest it should harden them : nor shall we always wait till they *show* their bad dispositions ; on the contrary, the love we feel for them, and our fear lest they should choose the broad way that leads to destruc-

tion, will make us anxious to warn them of the dreadful end which awaits the Sabbath-breaker, the profane, the swearer, the liar, the drunkard, the pilferer, the impure, and all who do not love God.

“Remember, that there are two ways of making children mind us: one is, by making them afraid of us; the other, by making them love us. If we choose the first way, the children will fear our punishments; if we pursue the other, they will fear our displeasure. On the first plan, we *may* be minded, as long as we are present: if we succeed in the second plan, we shall be more likely to be minded, both when present and when absent.

“I have known each of these plans tried by different teachers; and the end has shown, that nothing is more powerful with children than firmness joined with love.”

As to the detail of order, discipline, and instruction, much must be left to the ingenuity of the teacher. The following hints must suffice as an outline:

A register and roll book of the class or school should be kept and marked accurately. This is desirable to be done by the teacher rather than by the secretary of the school or other individuals. For convenience, the roll might be called when dismissing them from their seats at the close of the school; this might give regularity and order to that part of their duty, and save time.

Learning portions of Scripture by dictation is a pleasing and instructive exercise when the verses are alternately repeated by teachers and scholars. The ninetieth Psalm is a very impressive portion for this purpose, as far as the 12th verse inclusive; teaching the pupils to use the 12th verse as a

prayer, viz.: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Such portions of Scripture are very suitable to be used as preparatory to prayer. The ninety-fifth Psalm to 7th verse is very impressive, and well adapted to commence the religious exercises of the class. Psalm one hundred and thirty-nine may be taught in the same manner, and may be frequently repeated with good effect. Care should be taken in all Scripture quotations to give the very words of the text without variation. The elliptical method of reciting portions of Scripture previously learned, is not only useful by invigorating the mind, but will be found always to afford pleasure to the children. It consists in reciting portions in part, and the scholars supplying the part left out—for example, in the chapter of Beatitudes. The teacher begins by saying, Blessed are the peacemakers; the scholars add, For they shall be called the children of God. All antithetical portions are very forcible, and must impress the mind when used in this way. For example, 1 Cor. xv. 52: For the trumpet shall sound—S. The dead shall be raised.—T. It is sown in weakness—S. It is raised in power—T. It is sown a natural body—S. It is raised a spiritual body, &c. Another method of instruction is by analysis. Hymns and songs offer a very useful means for the exercise of this method—as well as short portions of Scripture, such as the parables and the Proverbs. An exposition of each verse should be given as it is dictated and recited by the scholars, and then the questions asked on every member of the sentence or paragraph that will admit of it.

In the use of picture lessons great care is neces-

sary to make the amusement subordinate to instruction. The subject, whether of narrative or natural history, should be well studied by the teacher, the picture explained, and the questions asked on it.

The use of good and appropriate pictures in the instruction of young children is very important. The impressions made are lasting as existence, and the dumb teachings of a Scripture print in infancy may give direction and character to a long and eventful life.

Lamartine, the celebrated eastern traveller, furnishes a striking illustration of this truth.

“My mother,” he says, “had received from my grandmother on the bed of death, a beautiful copy of the Bible of Royaumont, in which she taught me to read when I was a little child. This Bible had engravings on sacred subjects on every page. They depicted Joseph and Samuel; and above all, those beautiful patriarchal scenes in which the solemn and primitive nature of the east was blended with all the acts of the simple and wonderful lives of the fathers of mankind. When I had repeated my lesson well, and read, with only a fault or two, the half page of historical matter, my mother uncovered the engraving, and holding the book open in her lap, showed and explained it to me as my recompense.

“The sight of these engravings, the explanations, and the poetical commentaries of my mother, inspired me, from the most tender infancy, with a taste and inclination for biblical lore.

“From the love of the things themselves, to the desire of seeing the places where these things had occurred, there was but a step. I burned, therefore, from the age of eight years, with the desire of going to visit those mountains on which God descended;

those deserts where the angel pointed out to Hagar the hidden spring, whence her famished child, dying with thirst, might derive refreshment; those rivers which flowed from the terrestrial paradise; the spot in the firmament at which the angels were seen ascending and descending Jacob's ladder. 'The desire grew with my growth, and strengthened with my strength; I was always dreaming of travelling in the east; I never ceased arranging in my mind a vast and religious epopee of which these beautiful spots should be the principal scene.'*

* Among the various apparatus for the instruction of an infant school, the following, published by the Am. S. S. Union, may be mentioned as worthy to be examined by teachers.

First Lessons on the Great Principles of Religion, designed to present the great doctrines of the incarnation and atonement of Christ, the nature and evidences of regeneration, the resurrection of the body, and the retributions of the world to come, in such language, and with such illustrations, as are intelligible to a child five or six years old. This work is accompanied by two cards of illustrations engraved on stone, and representing the beet, cabbage, coffee, carrot, bean, potato, onion, turnip, pea, sugar-cane, cotton-plant, and tea-plant.

The Mother's and Infant School Teacher's Assistant, is designed to supply the parent or teacher of very young children with matter of instruction.

Natural History.—Containing the elements of the science in a form, language, and mode of illustration suited to young children; and furnishing at once a variety of useful information, blended with simple religious truths. It contains fifty cuts, coloured, and is accompanied by a series of cards, seven in number, and containing from thirty to forty different objects of natural history, drawn and coloured from nature, with appropriate lessons in large type.

Picture Counting Cards.—A series of five large cards, viz.: The Roses; the Dogs; the Cows; the Coaches; the Wagons. They are all coloured, and printed on both sides; and are de-

signed to represent numbers to the eye, and to connect useful elementary instruction with religious thought and duty.

Infant School Lessons.—On a series of fifty large sheets.

No. 1. Alphabet, large and small.

2. Picture Alphabet.

3 to 8. Spelling Lessons.

9 to 26. Containing each a passage of Scripture, and reading and spelling lessons, prose and poetry.

27, 28. Names and days of months, and names of books of the New Testament.

29, 30. Striking contrasts from the Bible.

31 to 50. Single passages of Scripture in large type.

These sheets are sold separately or in the set.

A new series of twenty-four Infant Lessons, on large cards, each containing a verse of Scripture, and an appropriate verse of a simple hymn.

The Farming Cards.—A series of four large coloured engravings representing the Farmer Ploughing, the Farmer Sowing, the Farmer Reaping, and the Farmer Threshing; with lessons printed on both sides, describing the process and tools of labour, and connecting with the subject plain religious instruction.

Lithographic Prints of Animals.—Or a series of seven beautiful engravings on stone, accurately drawn from the living object, and preserving the relative size of the animals, viz.:—The Buffalo, Lion, Horse, Beaver, Dog, Eagle, and Camel. Each print is accompanied with a lesson, covering both sides of the card, and giving a general description of the nature, habits and uses of the animals; besides references to Scripture and practical lessons.

Sunday Readings, or the Child's Sabbath Pleasantly and Profitably Employed; printed in a large octavo form, containing ten brightly coloured historical engravings of Scripture subjects, with a plain explanation of each. The subjects are Adam naming the animals; the death of Abel; the meeting of Jacob and Esau; the selling of Joseph; discovery of Moses in the water; Moses' charge to Joshua; the Shepherds at Bethlehem; Christ's entrance into Jerusalem; the Crucifixion; and Paul before Agrippa. There is also a small coloured engraving at the end of each article. The book is closed with the Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Creed, Rules for the Table, and Rules for the Nursery.

CHAPTER V.

§ 1. HAVING thus briefly described the principal varieties of schools as they respect the age and character of pupils, and the location, we will now return to the company of children whom we left collected and prepared for the ordinary process of organization; we suppose the superintendent and teachers to have been duly appointed, and to be at their posts in season to receive the very earliest scholar that presents himself, and the first requisite is to enter the names of the children in a book prepared for that purpose.

This book is the foundation of the records of the school, and should be kept with great care; and as we are inclined to believe that much of the permanency and outward order and prosperity of a Sunday-school are greatly promoted by a due attention to the various record-books employed; we shall hereafter give that subject special consideration.

There can be no doubt that when the school is large, and there is no distinct infant school, the children of six years old and under should be separated (at least, so far as the system of instruction is concerned) from the rest of the school, and should be particularly favoured in the arrangements. For example: they should be removed as far as possible from all sights and sounds that would tend to divert their attention. They should be permitted to change their position at least once in ten or fifteen minutes, and should never be confined to the place of meeting more than one hour at one time. The teacher or

teachers who are assigned to them should possess rare attainments, and instead of committing them to the youngest and least experienced, (which is very often done,) they should have all the benefits which the wisdom of the wisest, and the experience of the oldest can afford, together with all the sympathy and tenderness which the period of infancy and childhood so much require. The *temper* and *manners* of those who have the care of the infant classes should be an object of peculiar concern, as the earliest impressions are the deepest.

An ingenious and devoted teacher can instruct a very large class of such children with advantage, and the number who are at all competent is so small, that it will be generally necessary to assign all the children of this class to one or at most two teachers. If a separate apartment can be had, one of the teachers should serve as principal, and the other as assistant. If the infant children merely constitute a class in the school, they should be so placed as to leave the room without disturbing others, and to be first in the general dismissal.

At the other extreme, we sometimes find those who are, or think themselves too far advanced to render the general organization and instruction of the school agreeable or profitable to them.* They are not Sunday-school children, though they are disposed to avail themselves of the library and of the opportunities which a good Sunday-school affords for obtaining knowledge, human and divine. Such persons should be treated with great kindness and respect, and every thing should be avoided

* In many country schools in the United States, from one-sixth to one-tenth are over sixteen years of age.

which may disgust or embarrass them. A teacher of respectability and decided piety should be assigned to them, and such accommodations afforded as circumstances will admit. The Bible class system should be adopted for them; it being desirable in this case that those over fourteen or sixteen should be formed or known as a Bible class, as it was in the other, that those under six should be formed as an infant class or school. Individual exceptions will, undoubtedly, occur. The mode of instruction adapted to such pupils may vary, but as a general rule, some kind of question book is useful to fix the attention on prominent points. With adults, perhaps, simple reading and explanation may be most suitable. In some schools the direct object of the juvenile Bible classes is to prepare the members to become teachers, and the course of instruction is modified accordingly. It will, of course, be strictly religious. To teach what Christ taught should be the great object. The introduction of profane history, natural philosophy, anecdotes, &c., should be confined to the elucidation of the passage in hand. The study of Jewish Antiquities, Sacred Geography, and the evidences of Christianity would be entirely consistent.* There is an

* I give out a question on the Sabbath, says a teacher, to be answered on the next by written quotations from the Scripture. The questions are intended to comprise the principal doctrines and precepts of religion. The exercise is interesting, and I think very useful, and by no means difficult to introduce.

It is well sometimes to give such questions as, What is faith, justification, prophecy, miracle, &c.

The less complicated the studies are, the better. The requirements must be simple and easily performed; all appearance of compulsion must be avoided, if we would bring all the school into a ready compliance with our measures.

interesting topic closely connected with the subject of Bible classes, to which we can barely allude.

Much has been said, and well said, respecting the importance of maintaining personal intercourse in after life between Sunday-school teachers and their pupils. During the eventful and critical period of youth (say from fourteen to eighteen or twenty) the character usually becomes fixed for life, and for the the most part for eternity. Happily, however, young persons usually evince an attachment, often affectionate and ardent, to a teacher under whose instruction they have long been placed; and this communicates to the teacher a moral influence over them, which, if kept up and rightly employed at a time of life so peculiarly exposed to danger, may, under the blessing of God, be attended with most beneficial and enduring results.

"Among the means to this end," says one, "is the establishment of Bible classes, a measure above all others calculated, by the blessing of God, to promote the object in view. If teachers of piety and experience would select some suitable hour every week, or fortnight, to meet those whom they have heretofore taken so much pleasure in instructing, they would rarely find any reluctance on the part of the young persons, or their parents; and with regard to those of them who may be at service, a word spoken with judgment, and in due season, to their employers, would generally secure liberty of attendance. The afternoon or evening of Sunday would probably be found the most advantageous time; since even servants are then, for the most part, disengaged.

"The method of conducting such a class will readily suggest itself to every one. The reading of a

few verses of Scripture may often be made to furnish suitable materials for conversation. The young persons should be encouraged to ask questions ; or questions may be proposed by the teacher, and instructive incidents may occasionally be alluded to, or extracts from authentic biography or narrative be read and commented upon. The whole should be concluded, as well as commenced, by prayer from the teacher alone. A young person may need some advice, or perhaps reproof, which cannot properly be given in the presence of others ; but which, if judiciously and affectionately administered in private, may sink deep into the heart ; and it is easy, on such occasions as these, to request such young person to remain after the departure of the rest, or appoint some other time for an interview."

It has been judiciously recommended to teachers to identify themselves, as much as possible, with their senior scholars, associating with them at all times and places where it is practicable, and thus, by affectionate regard, manifest a personal interest in their welfare, by leading their minds to an acquaintance with men and things, with time and eternity, with themselves and with God ; for what can be more gratifying to a youth than to be affectionately noticed by a kind and sympathizing friend and teacher, his senior in years and superior in knowledge ? The simple idea of *intellectual improvement* is sufficient to compensate him for all the trouble. If nothing more were desired than some way by which he could profitably and pleasantly spend the Sabbath without doing violence to the dictates of conscience, this would be an object worth his regard. What em-

ployment more noble than the study of the pure truths of divine revelation? It is no condescension in a young man to stoop to be taught of God, to spend one day in seven in exploring those truths into which angels love to look.

§ II. It is proper that we should advert more particularly to the difficulty of *keeping older scholars* in school. That their presence is of great service, no one can doubt; they give character and strength to the school, and they are formed for better service as teachers, by suffering Sunday-school habits and associations to become fixed. They are once in a while employed to supply an occasional vacancy among the teachers, and this, also, is good discipline.* Notwithstanding these obvious advantages, however, it is very rare that Sunday-school pupils (boys especially) can be retained after fourteen or sixteen years of age. They generally leave school at this most critical period of their lives, and if they are away from the Christian influence of home, their exposure is very great. It is at this period that error most commonly takes root, and it has been well observed that whether we have our Sun-

* Bible-classes consisting of those who are, for the most part, too old for pupils of the regular classes of the school, serve to retain many who might otherwise feel that they had outgrown Sunday-school instruction; allure others who, but for them, might never have entered the school at all, and afford facilities for extending more largely the information of all.

It might be well to make the Bible class the intermediate stage where the scholar may be said to put on the gown of his manhood before he steps into the department of teaching. From its members the superintendent may make it a rule to select his teachers as occasion may call for them, and it would then be understood that a principal business of the class was to prepare for the duty.

day-schools opened for young men or not, Satan will have his schools opened every day at every corner. He always has something fitted to meet every age and circumstance. None can be too old or too wise for him to teach.

To determine the best method of retaining this class of pupils under Sunday-school influence, it is necessary to consider the prevailing reasons of their withdrawing; among these are the solicitation of worldly associates; the many occupations of the week; the preference of some other place of public worship; the irksomeness of restraint; the opportunity to teach, which is offered in some other school; an offensive change in the class or its teacher, or, more than all, the idea that they are too old to go to any school. A very common desire among those who are just passing from the period of childhood to youth, is to avoid all associations with children. Hence a common objection by such to Sunday-schools is, "I am too large or too old to remain in a school where there are so many younger and smaller than I am." This feeling must be respected. It cannot be prevented. To counteract such adverse influences we need a strong attachment on the part of the pupil to the teacher, a sensible improvement by attendance on the school, powerful and interesting associations, and such a separation from other classes, as it respects the course of instruction, the seat, or apartment, and the age or influence of the teacher, as may be practicable. A pleasant apartment, well furnished with maps and a library of reference, or reading books, will always be found attractive. But, after all, the *personal influence of the teacher* is the grand agency for retaining scholars. If he is judicious and really devoted to his

work, he may ordinarily retain every member of his class until Providence removes them, or until their services are required in a higher station. It has been observed that one reason why so many of the older scholars leave the school is, that they get ahead of their teachers in knowledge, and finding that they receive no benefit from attending, leave it as a matter of course, not to say, *of duty*.

An experienced teacher says, "I have often asked myself the question, how can the larger boys be persuaded to attend regularly? and as far as my experience and observation enable me to reply, I can only say, 'give them a punctual, regular, attentive, and faithful teacher, and the Bible;'" and another says, "I would also cherish a very familiar and affectionate intercourse with persons of this age, and let them see that I am a learner with them, and that I consider the school one of the most favoured spots on the earth for religious instruction."

The oldest and youngest of the pupils being thus disposed of, we are left with the great body of the school between six and sixteen; and the task of organizing them is now before us. In this, as in every thing else of the kind, any general rules must be modified by circumstances; such as the number of pupils, the number of teachers, the conveniences of the place, &c.

Some persons have advocated the practice of forming separate classes of twenty or thirty under one teacher. If the number of pupils is altogether disproportionate to the number of teachers, such a course might be adopted with advantage; and in any event it is better to do this, than to divide the twenty or thirty among four or five incompetent

teachers, or than to assign two teachers to one class.*

§ III. Until time and opportunity are found to ascertain the capacities and attainments of the pupils, the most expeditious division is made by age.

Example: there are ten teachers present and ninety-one scholars. Those under six years of age are directed to go to the seat where Mr. B. sits, and will remain under his care till the school is arranged. Thirteen go. Those over sixteen are directed to take seats near Mr. B. until a permanent teacher is provided. Eleven go. There remain sixty-seven pupils, or twenty-six boys and forty-one girls; and nine teachers, six females and three males. The boys between six and nine will form one class; those between nine and twelve another, and the residue the third; each having a teacher assigned to it as soon as it is formed.

In like manner, the girls will be divided into six classes. 1. Those who are seven and under. 2. Those who are eight and under. 3. Those who are nine and under. 4. Those who are eleven and under. 5. Those who are thirteen and under; and 6 the residue. To each of these also will be assigned a teacher. If there should be any obvious disproportion in this division, it can be rectified by a moment's attention.

The number of a class, as we have said, must of course vary with the circumstances of a school. Few teachers will find it in their power faithfully to attend to more than eight; and the more enlarged

* For a successful experiment with a class of this kind, and the particulars of its management, see *Sunday-school Journal*, Dec. 7, 1834, vol. i. (new series,) p. 44.

their views of duty, the less will they feel inclined to take a larger number.

Eight are as many as can be taught in one class with advantage, in a room where there are other classes. If the number exceed this, the teacher cannot speak loud enough to be heard by all without interrupting the neighbouring classes, and while engaged with some of the pupils, the rest are gazing about, talking or trifling. Again, it is seldom necessary that a class should consist of less than five.

It is better, for the most part, when it is practicable, that male teachers should have charge of the male classes, though it is often found advantageous to assign a male teacher to a female class. There can be no doubt, we think, of the inexpediency of having boys and girls in the same class. We have observed with considerable care the order and progress of two or three schools in which this practice has obtained, and have become fully satisfied that unavoidable mischief attends it. "A promiscuous classification has been regarded by the friends of the institution as a dangerous experiment; parents have been generally averse to it, and it is believed to be entirely unsuited to the state of society, especially in cities."* We do not say that no circumstances can occur in which a mixed arrangement may be expedient; but as a general rule the advantages of separation greatly preponderate.

The organization of a school when once thus far completed, only requires attention to make it perfect and permanent.

In a flourishing country school which we have seen, an organizing committee is appointed every

* Family Visiter, vol. i. p. 222.

spring, whose duty it is, from the returns of the visiting committee, to arrange the children in classes, preserving the classes of the former year as far as it can be done and is expedient, in order to give as much permanency to the system as possible, and forming the new scholars into new classes ; it being the object to have those scholars who attend but a part of the year in separate classes.

The time occupied in the above labour may be nearly an hour. Every step should be recorded on a loose paper, to be afterwards transferred to the regular record and class books ; and the lesson for the next Sabbath being appointed ; question books furnished ; and the manner of studying the lesson explained ; the school is dismissed, with a word of counsel and encouragement, and such religious exercises as the occasion suggests.

After the classes are formed by this arbitrary rule, it will be necessary for the teachers to point out any changes that should be made to correct inequalities.

We believe it is better when classes are numbered, to designate the lowest or youngest class as the FIRST. It obviates many difficulties, and is equally natural and convenient as the reversed order.

It is necessary in organizing a class to consider several particulars.

1. GREAT INEQUALITY IN AGE AND SIZE SHOULD BE AVOIDED. Nothing, perhaps, is more embarrassing to a boy or girl fourteen or fifteen years old, (or one whose height would indicate that age,) than to be placed with children of eight or nine, though they may be their superiors in every thing but age and stature. It suggests to the eye a conclusion very much to their disadvantage.

2. GREAT INEQUALITY IN CAPACITY AND ATTAINMENTS IS ALSO TO BE AVOIDED. For example, those who can read should not be classed with those who cannot; and those who can profitably use a question book should not be classed with those who merely read or commit; nor should those who are weak or deficient in natural powers be classed with pupils of strong powers of mind.

In respect to habits of life and association, also, it may be regarded as a general rule, that it is injudicious to violate them when it can be avoided, and yet they should not be favoured invidiously, or to the manifest prejudice of the organization. By preserving this general uniformity in capacity, attainments and habits of life, in each class they can all be engaged simultaneously on the same lesson, and thus a feeling of interest will be produced, which would not otherwise exist. The instruction given to the class either individually or collectively, may be understood by all. But whenever there is a wide difference in intelligence and progress, and different books and lessons are used, it is impossible for a teacher to make his exercises profitable to all.

3. EVERY THING LIKE PRECEDENCE IN THE ORDER OF THE CLASSES IS OBJECTIONABLE.—The first, second, and third classes should not be regarded as any higher than the fourth, fifth, and sixth. And as we have already suggested, by calling the youngest class *first*, the idea of precedence in age or attainments is precluded.

4. Proper deference must be paid to peculiar circumstances—as, 1. Parents who are indifferent to the subject of Sunday-school instruction may consent that their children should attend, if they

may be under some particular teacher in whom they have confidence. 2d. The partiality of the scholars themselves for particular teachers with whom they are acquainted, and teachers for particular scholars who are perhaps the children of some near friend, should be *sometimes* indulged. 3d. Children in classes organized on the principle of equal capacity and attainments, often become unequal in these respects, in consequence of the dissimilar advantages they enjoy on other days of the week ; and on this account it might be desirable, as before intimated, to transfer them to some other class.

Changes of this kind, however, are attended with much embarrassment and danger, and should not be made without urgent necessity and much deliberation, and *never without the express authority of the superintendent.*

Teachers are often unwilling that a pupil should be removed, however obvious may be the propriety of the change ; and still more frequently is the attachment of a pupil to his teacher so strong as to render a separation very painful. Sometimes this attachment is felt to a faithful teacher, and then the sense of duty on each side may generally be depended upon to suggest a proper course. In many cases, however, it results from the forbearance or indulgence of the teacher, and then the removal of the child is desirable, and is generally attended with great advantages.

In all cases of change the reason should be frankly stated and fully explained to all concerned.

It has sometimes been asked "what means should be taken to remove the prejudices which children in the same class often entertain against

each other, especially when they are not without cause?"

So far as our personal observation has extended, such prejudices have not been very common, nor very obstinate. Disagreeable manners or habits, a great degree of ignorance or awkwardness, connected with pride and self-conceit, and, above all, mean or deceitful conduct, are the usual causes of them.

We have already intimated that in arranging a class, care should be taken that the association involve as little contrariety of character and manners as possible. And often, if it is found that strong prejudices exist against any particular member of it, it would be well, when practicable, to remove the obnoxious member to some other class. In this removal a good opportunity is afforded as well to try the magnanimity and forbearance of the class to which the person is removed, as to instruct those from whom he is separated in their duty to him and to each other, and to show to the individual himself the importance of correcting his faults, which have been the occasion of so much trouble and bad feeling.

The skilful teacher will easily accommodate his instruction, and especially his conversation in weekly visits, to the existing state of his class; and when alone with each pupil, he can urge him to a course of conduct which shall tend at once to the removal of the prejudices and their cause, while no one but himself and the individual member with whom he converses, knows his design. We have great confidence in the private personal influence of the teacher over the individual pupil, and it is to this mainly that we attribute the surprising advan-

tages which have always resulted from regular faithful visits. And we may add, that such prejudices are often removed by the intercourse of a few months between the children, especially when every thing is avoided on the part of the teacher, which would tend to confirm them.

When the numbers denote the rank of classes, much difficulty is found in transferring a pupil to a lower class. It is usually attended with disappointment and with mortification, and often affects the character of the child very injuriously. Very much depends, however, upon the *manner* in which it is done; and a skilful superintendent can shun much of the evil.

Some explanation to the parents on these points is always useful. They are (or ought to be) very sensitive to whatever affects the standing of a child; and when any important change is made in its relation to the school, the more ignorant they are, the more likely are they to misconstrue the proceeding and to take offence. For this and other reasons, it is well to have a full understanding with parents when the child enters the school.

To this end it has been found useful to furnish the parent or guardian with a blank form of application written or printed in substance as follows:—

Application for the admission of a pupil.

“To the superintendent of the Sunday-school, &c.

“Please to receive A. B. into your school. He (or she) is not connected with any other Sunday-school, and he (or she) shall attend punctually and constantly upon your’s. The rules of your school shall be complied with, and he (or she) shall not be withdrawn from your care without notice to you, nor without an application for a certificate of dis-

mission. The visits of his (or her) teacher will be acceptable. Signed, C. D."

Such an engagement on the part of the parent gives something of character and importance to the relation between the pupil and the school, and would often prevent the sudden removal of a child through caprice or momentary excitement.

There is a favourable opportunity at the commencement of the school, or at the admission of each scholar, to present to the parents a view of the responsibilities and obligations which attach to them and their children and the Sunday-school teacher. It will not seem impertinent nor unseasonable for the superintendent to do this in person where it is practicable, or for the teacher to do it at his (or her) first visit, or by a written or printed note when conversation is inadmissible. We need not say how much good might be done by a short tract, (say four pages, or the broad side of a quarter of a sheet,) plainly and solemnly written, and printed in large type, to be left with the parents when they are first solicited to send their children. Probably it would in thousands of instances give them the first proper view of parental responsibility.

The rule of one of the New York schools formerly was, and perhaps still is, that no child shall be enrolled as a pupil until visited, and a special agreement is entered into between his parents and the superintendent, at which time the subject is fully discussed. None leave the school without a final visit and charge from the superintendent. In the same school every scholar has a particular seat assigned to him, which he always retains. No change of place is allowed in the classes. These two principles seem to have proved valuable so far as

their influence can be traced ; for we are told that out of a register of two hundred and forty-three, the average attendance through the year was two hundred and five, and that of the whole number on the register through the series of five years, more than half were in attendance at the close of that term.

§ IV. *Winter schools.*—Winter schools have come very much into favour within a few years, and though their organization may not differ materially from that of summer schools, their importance and peculiar advantages deserve particular notice in this connexion.

It is difficult to imagine what first suggested the discontinuance of Sunday-schools at the very season which is regarded as most favourable to instruction in common-schools. The days are shorter, the travelling is often unpleasant ; a comfortable room and good and sufficient clothing are absolutely necessary ; but if other schools are better attended in winter than in summer, and if the chief expense for public instruction is bestowed on winter schools, why should not the Sunday-school be enjoyed then ?—Why should we cut off all supplies of knowledge from this source, bury the library and question books, seal the mouths of teachers, and send the children home for a long, dreary term of five or six months ? Surely it is not wise to give up the elastic, buoyant season of winter, and postpone our schools for religious instruction until the body is exhausted, and the spirit languid under the oppressive heat of summer, and when for these and other causes secular education is almost suspended.

It is said to be difficult to sustain a winter school because of the negligence and supineness of teachers. They cannot be persuaded to visit their absent scho-

lars at this inclement season. This may be a substantial reason for thin attendance, at a winter school, in thinly settled towns; but we question whether teachers who are devoted and punctual in summer, so completely change their habits in winter. . .

It is said, moreover, that the long time which is necessary to warm a school-room, and the frequent and deep snows are difficulties not to be avoided, and render the advantage of a winter school, when compared with the labour and exposure attending it, very doubtful. Hence, in many places all the schools but the central one are discontinued, and the scholars either organize into neighbourhood classes and repair to a private house, or disband for the season. In the south and west the great rains, miry roads, and poor buildings are urged as excuses for discontinuing the winter schools.

The views entertained on this subject by the professed friends of Sunday-schools are widely different. While some regard their continuance through the year as impracticable, others consider winter the most favourable season for improvement, and would as soon suspend public worship.

We have given some of the reasons urged in support of the former opinion, and in behalf of the latter we may say that by far the most flourishing and useful schools that we have ever known, are those that were continued through the winter; and in many instances, within our knowledge, the teachers have been compelled by the earnest solicitations of the children to keep the school open, and this even in the long cold winters of the northernmost States.*

* Several cases of this kind in Vermont and Maine have

Sometimes it has been made a prominent article in the constitution of the school, that it should be kept open summer and winter; and very judicious men have gone so far as to recommend that the summer schools

come to our knowledge, and instances have occurred in which children have walked nearly three miles through deep snow, and in severe cold, to attend a Sunday-school.

Several years since, in the northern part of Pennsylvania, a Sabbath-school was commenced in the summer, and on the approach of cold weather, its suspension was regarded by the majority of the teachers as a matter of course. The attendance of the children was thought to be utterly impracticable. It was finally agreed, at the urgent request of the only dissenting teacher, to refer the matter to the children. After a full explanation of the difficulties to which they would be exposed, those who wished the school to continue, and pledged themselves to attend punctually, were requested to rise. Every boy and girl were on their feet in an instant; and when, to avoid all mistake, those who wished it suspended were told to rise, not one left his seat. The matter was settled; and in that place, the school has been continued throughout all seasons, and in all weather, without the interruption of a single Sabbath. The writer lived at the time referred to within a few rods of the school, and had occasion to observe that the most regular and punctual attendance was on the part of the very children whose attendance was considered most out of the question; some of whom came more than four miles. And when a deep snow or a stormy morning gave us an unusual proportion of absences, the proportion was almost uniformly greatest among the teachers.

The same question has since been decided in other schools in that region by a similar reference, and *uniformly* with a similar result. Of two schools of *different* denominations, one was continued, for the first time, by a vote of the children, and the other suspended, as usual, by the decision of the teachers. The consequence was, that many of the children from the other school attended that which continued during the winter, and several, when the other school *thawed out* in the spring, refused to return to it.

should be suspended rather than the winter schools.* It is unquestionably true that some of the most powerful and extensive revivals of religion that have been known in Sunday-schools, have commenced

In another case, where the teachers had decided on suspending for the winter, the school, after the lapse of one Sabbath, was revived at the request of the children, and continued without intermission. If a case has ever occurred where a school, conducted as it ought to be, was suspended at the request of the children, tell us when and where it was. If, as we fully believe, there is no such case, let this matter, in all honesty, be put on the proper basis, and notice be given from the pulpit, that the school is suspended for the winter, because the teachers prefer it, or because the arrangements of the congregation make its continuance inconvenient, or because it is the custom to do so, or whatever else may be the true cause; but let it not be ascribed to the disinclination of the children to attend, unless they have had an opportunity offered them so to do, and have refused.

* If schools are suspended in winter, they will frequently not revive in spring; and when they do, it will take one-fourth of the summer to get them as far advanced in usefulness as they were in autumn, when they ceased. Winter schools are more useful than summer schools, and especially in the country; the first reason is, that the mind is clearer in winter than in summer, which applies everywhere; and, second, the long winter nights afford time to get the Sabbath-school lessons, and to read the Sabbath-school books and papers; and, third, that the children in the country have comparatively little to do; whereas in the summer, every one that can carry a hoe, hold a plough, pick up a bush, or carry a sheaf, has something with which to fill up the long day, and to make the whole of the short night necessary for sleep. On the Sabbath they experience more or less languor from the fatigue of the week. To remove the difficulty of getting to school in the winter, (if it exists,) have a greater number of schools, and so located that the distance may be small. Perhaps in no way can we render winter evenings more *useful* than by a supply of good books. This the Sabbath-school library affords, not merely for children, but

at the close of a winter term, after a season of steady and close attention to the subjects of instruction. In a single instance, and that, too, where other means of grace were enjoyed in rich abundance, not less than fifty souls were supposed to be brought into the kingdom of Christ by the continuance of a Sunday-school through the winter months.

It would be well, before any school is suspended for the winter, to have a general meeting of the teachers. Let the parents and children be invited to attend, and let the question be solemnly discussed and determined, whether the difficulties are insuperable. If the room is cold and exposed to the weather, cannot the ingenuity of teachers invent some method to make it comfortable? If the inconvenience of attending is considerable, cannot the opportunity it affords of giving and getting instruction be made the more valuable?*

for youth and adults. A Sabbath-school library which is locked up during the winter does not accomplish one-fourth of the good it might. In the winter the books will be read; and read, too, by many who read only then. Sabbath-schools should be kept in operation through the winter, for the sake of keeping the books in circulation, if for no other reason. The winter school confers its blessings on many whom the summer school does not reach.

* The following testimony on this point is from a resident citizen of Aurora, Indiana:

"Those schools that live through our worst winters are the most flourishing in the summer; and those scholars that regard not the weather are those that are deriving the most benefit from the institution. Of our twelve schools that have continued through this winter, nine are in the country, and some are so situated that you can scarcely conceive of worse roads than many of the scholars have to travel. The average attendance of the school in this town, through the winter, has been fifteen teachers and

sults which are attributed to Sunday-schools really flow from them, it is obviously important they should be unceasing, for it has been well said by one who has been very useful in diffusing their influence, that as a precious means of grace there can be no reason for dispensing with them at any season of the year, which does not apply with equal force to the suspension of all other means of grace, that require a sacrifice of personal comfort and convenience.

§ V. The school being organized, whether for summer or winter, or both, we need next, a fixed, intelligible, practicable system of discipline. The absence of this has often countervailed the influence of instruction, and rendered a school a curse rather than a blessing to those concerned with it. It may be said generally, that the best discipline for children, under all circumstances, is that comprised in the proper application of scriptural truth. If the

sixty scholars. Six of those teachers, and twenty of the scholars, have had to travel more than a mile, along a road which is one continued hill, and so deep and miry that it was sometimes almost impassable by a yoke of cattle, with an empty cart; and never were our scholars more regular than they have been this winter. The disposition to surmount all obstacles, and continue the schools throughout the winter, is rapidly increasing, and I do not wish to hear of any thing but what will encourage that disposition. I wish to see the schools as permanent as the Sabbath, and not to be interrupted on any occasion, until they are stopped by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. In Aurora, we compel every thing, the most important meetings for public worship not excepted, to give place to the school; as we are convinced that our school has done more substantial good to our village and its vicinity, than we have derived from all the other sources."

principles of the Bible are presented with propriety and force, so as to press upon the conscience, they may be arranged so as to form a most efficient system of correction and reproof.

It is sometimes made a question whether it should be the task of the teacher or of the superintendent to manage cases of discipline. When we enter a noisy, disorderly school, we never think of charging it, or any part of it, to the teachers. The idea that they are to be censured at all never occurs to us, so clearly and obviously does it appear to us that all this is the concern of the superintendent. The teachers are of various character and humour, and their rules and degrees of discipline may be so various as to conflict with each other. There must, therefore, be one head, and one administrator of the law, and upon him should be thrown all responsibility for the outward conduct and discipline of the school. If inexperience, or unfaithfulness, or want of skill in the teacher occasions much disorder and misconduct in any particular class, the superintendent has only to transfer, or reorganize the class, or remove the teacher to a station in which his services may be equally valuable, and where the qualifications he lacks are less necessary.

Each individual teacher must contribute to the general order of the school by keeping the attention of every member of his own class steadily fixed upon the subject under consideration. And it is obvious, that if each member was thus controlled, cases of discipline for the superintendent would be very rare. For this very reason there is no stronger obligation on the teacher to examine the lesson and

prepare himself at all points rightly to divide the word of truth, than there is to exert all his skill in contriving, inventing, and ingeniously applying means of arresting and retaining the attention of his class. Who is found searching, at every opportune moment, for illustrations of Scripture, either in history, travels, maps, or prints? Who is looking for facts and anecdotes among the living and the dead, to enforce and impress truth? Who is spending strength, and time, and money in searching for what the experience and observation of others have taught? Who is so absorbed with the vast enterprise of enlightening, informing, and guiding an immortal being as to forget the monotony and tediousness of the detail, and think only of the effect of each measure and plan upon the great end which is in view? Such teachers have interested, quiet and orderly pupils.

In governing the school *we must depend rather upon preventing than punishing improper conduct.* In order to this, every teacher must have a constant supervision of each scholar. It is not necessary, when hearing one of his class read or recite, to give his undivided attention to that exercise; a little practice will enable him at the same time to have an eye upon the whole class, and observe their positions and actions. And in time of singing and prayer, after habituating himself to the practice a little, he will find it no hinderance to his own devotions, to put himself in a position to oversee his class. And this watchfulness on the part of the teachers, both in the school and in the church, will effectually prevent all noise and improprieties.

It is believed that corporeal punishment was

never common in our Sunday-schools, nor any of those modes of correction which inflict bodily pain and which are not unusual in most daily schools, such as pinching, pulling ears, boxing, kicking, and striking, or standing on one foot, or holding a weight at arm's length. These barbarous practices would not be tolerated, and even the expulsion of an incorrigibly negligent and troublesome scholar should be regarded as an extreme resort. When the removal of the delinquent becomes necessary to the well-being of the school, it is better to do it privately, than to make a public example of him, and thereby excite his worst passions, and, perhaps, enlist the sympathies of the school in his behalf.

The displeasure of the superintendent and teacher, the loss of character in the class, the mortification of being removed from the class, and occupying some separate seat, and suspension from any share in the library, in the exercises of the class or school, or in the instruction of the teachers, are among the common means of discipline. Let the child have his place in the class, and on the roll, but let him be entirely unnoticed; let him be silent when the rest of the school sing; let him read to himself while the rest of the school recite; and, in short, let him be treated as one whose repentance and submission are desired and expected, but who cannot be treated as a member of the school until they are shown; this has often proved to be the most salutary discipline in cases within our personal knowledge.

At other times it has been found useful to reverse a child's position on the form, or seat, obliging him to face outward from the teacher. Sometimes the offender has been placed by himself, or sent home for the day.

Private admonition and rebuke from a teacher or superintendent after the school is dismissed, is often highly effective. In our own experience, the case has never occurred but once, in which a serious, decided, personal remonstrance (if opportunity could be enjoyed to make it) has not been sufficient to bring the offending pupil to a sense of duty.

So also a note or a visit to the parent *for the particular purpose* of representing to them the conduct of the child, and seeking their counsel and aid in correcting it, is often an effectual method of correction. One of the most interesting cases of discipline we have ever met occurred in the experience of Mr. Raikes, and we have taken advantage of it to furnish a frontispiece to the present volume.

It was his custom to visit, in person, the families of the poor, and to persuade the parents to feel interested in the well-being of their children; while at the same time he persuaded the children to come to the Sunday-school. On one occasion he called at the residence of a poor but respectable woman. She lived in a very decent house, comfortably furnished; but her life was made unhappy by the behaviour of her little girl, who had a very bad temper. At the time Mr. Raikes called at the house, this little girl happened to be in a sulky mood. Her mother complained that she had done all she could to correct her, but it was of no use; she continued her obstinacy, and her conduct had become very bad. With the mother's consent, Mr. Raikes began to talk seriously to the girl; and concluded by telling her, that as the first step towards amendment, she must kneel down and ask her mother's pardon. The child continued sulky, and all Mr. Raikes could say had no effect upon her. At last

he said, "Well, then, if you have no regard for yourself, I have much regard for you. You will be ruined and lost, if you do not begin at once to be a good girl; and if you will not humble yourself, I must humble myself, and make a beginning for you." He then kneeled down before the child's mother, and putting his hands together like a penitent offender, asked her forgiveness. No sooner did the stubborn girl see him on his knees on her account, than her pride yielded; her obstinacy was overcome; she burst into tears; fell upon her knees; earnestly entreated her mother's forgiveness, and from that hour conducted herself as an obedient and gentle child.

The means of discipline we have suggested, employed in an affectionate, humble, prayerful spirit, *and so appearing to the offender*, will seldom fail to produce the desired effect.

When cases of discipline occur requiring public notice, manifold advantages are said to have resulted from interesting the pupils in their adjustment. The nature and bearings of the offence are pointed out in a clear and simple manner; the propriety and necessity of the law are shown, and the proof of the offence made conclusive. Now what would you wish, were you the offender? What measure would you mete to him? In the brief discussion which may ensue, a good opportunity may be found, it is said, to illustrate the nature of sin and punishment, and to bring to view and enforce the principles of the divine government.

These advantages may exist in some degree, but we apprehend that the less a school sees of its discipline, the better. There is a silent influence, proceeding from various causes, which is the soul

of government. Example is one of them. If the superintendent and teachers uniformly observe the rules they would enforce on their pupils, the best discipline is secured. Hence in some schools the rules are more rigidly applied to teachers than scholars—every minute's tardiness is noted; every impropriety is marked and rebuked, and for all disorder in the classes, they are held responsible.

A pupil should have cause to think his teacher faultless. Every apparent defect of character undoubtedly lessens the influence which he might and should exert; for the most effectual teaching, as well as the best discipline, is that of a faultless example.

It is impossible to prevent the scholars from whispering to each other, if the teachers allow themselves the liberty of saluting each other *in the school* with a good morning, and the news of the day, &c., and it is useless to think of keeping the children quiet and in their places, if the teachers, after having gone through with their lessons, leave their classes, and go and sit and converse with each other; neither can the pupils be impressed with the necessity of avoiding all noise and disorder, while they see and hear their superintendent and teacher walking about the room with a careless, heavy tread; and it is too unreasonable to require punctuality in the children, when the teacher is often half an hour too late.

Gentleness is one of the chief tributaries to good discipline. The government of a Sunday-school teacher is strictly parental, and should be, in every respect, kind and gentle. Have you a child of disagreeable and offensive manners? Perhaps it is the want of gentleness in her domestic

training, or in her week-day school, that has formed them. Perhaps her natural disposition is unhappy and irritable, and nothing but gentleness will win her confidence, or affect her heart. At any rate, whatever may have occasioned her defects, it is very certain that harshness and severity will not remedy them. The servant of the Lord must be *gentle*, showing all meekness to all men. The wisdom that is from above is pure and gentle. The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness, meekness, &c. And the great apostle beseeches his brethren "by the gentleness of Christ."

The discipline of a school should be *equal and impartial*.

Partiality is a fault. It is occasioned by the indulgence of improper feelings. It proceeds from judging not according to the exact truth of things, but according to the unjust inclination of the will and affections. To be partial to one is to favour him without just cause. There can be no appearance of this in a good Sunday-school teacher. It should be borne in mind, however, that the treatment of the members of a class may be entirely different, and yet no charge of partiality be incurred.

As before suggested, prayer and affectionate private exhortation have been the means not only of reforming, but, by the blessing of God, of converting some of the most wayward and depraved children. It is unquestionably true that reproof before the class is attended with many hazards, which are not incurred in private reproof: and that many advantages which the teacher might derive from the former, in the general management of the class, he loses in the latter.

Vigilant, steady and uniform adherence to established rules is of very great importance. Children will soon discover whether they can trifle with their teacher, or with any of the authorities of the school, and they will act accordingly.

Were we required to reduce the whole subject of discipline to three simple rules, they would be the following :

1. Let it be a rule that no one shall speak so loud as to be heard beyond his own class. This is often broken by the teacher, but more commonly by boys, who are taught in their day-schools to read in a loud, coarse tone. A little practice will make it very easy for all to speak so as to be perfectly heard by the class to which they belong, and yet not disturb others. The stillness that is thus produced invites, and indeed compels, attention. In spite of all care, however, there will be an unconscious rising of the voice, which would soon become disorderly. The superintendent should touch his bell, or, by a word or hint, check this as soon as it begins. The habit of quietness will in this manner be soon formed, and permanently, too; for those who have once known the comfort of a peaceful and still school-room, will not endure the clamour to which they once were, perhaps, insensible.

2. Another important point in maintaining order is to keep all the scholars engaged. The principal cause of disturbance lies in the conduct of the children who are left to themselves whilst the teacher is questioning others. A good rule on this point is to address the whole class, and require the attention of all to every part of the instruction. If the class is of a proper size, and the general stillness of the room allows the teacher to be heard,

this is easily done. In addressing them, look from one to another, check the slightest inattention or misconduct, and in asking questions, put them promiscuously, and not more than one or two to the same scholar. It is a miserable plan, in all respects, to take one at a time, and make the impression that the rest of the class have no interest in the lesson until their turns come in order. The lesson should be the lesson of all, and the answers, explanations, advice, &c. should be heard by all. Yet it is no uncommon thing to see a teacher so absorbed in his attention to one, that all the rest are playing, or yawning, or idle.

3. Another important rule is, that every scholar and teacher should take their proper seats on entering the room, and keep them until the schooltime is expired. When the session is not longer than an hour and a half, it should be the general law that no one should leave his seat. The practice of permitting children to leave the room is a very pernicious one. We know children that think it an indispensable prerogative that they should go out of church at some time during the service, and that many parents are thoughtless enough to allow them to disturb the congregation in this way. We trust that this is one of the evil customs which Sunday-schools will correct. It should be known as a rule of every school, that no child is allowed to leave his seat until the school is dismissed, and no exception should be permitted except at the request of a teacher to the superintendent.

If these rules are observed, a most important preparation will be made for the duty of instruction. They are simple and practicable. We venture to declare that no school which shall try them properly

for three Sabbaths in succession, will be willing to abandon them.

§ VI. *Rewards and punishments.* Among the means of exciting scholars to diligence and regularity of attendance, premiums formerly took the lead, and if they have no other claim to kind remembrance, it would be enough that they opened the way for the Sunday-school library. It seems now, however, to be generally agreed among the conductors of Sunday-schools that no public rewards or premiums should be offered, because it is a direct appeal to the carnal pride of children, which we wish to suppress, and not to cherish; and because no equitable rule can be laid down to govern the distribution.

The *ticket system*, as it is called, is still employed in a few schools, but with various modifications. Sometimes premiums are awarded for securing the attendance of new scholars, or small tickets of reward are given by the teachers individually when they think it will be useful to bestow them. Some contend that premiums are useful when they are awarded periodically to every child, as at Christmas, or New-Year, or on the fourth of July; but in this case they cease to be premiums and become gifts. Others hold that the use of premiums is justifiable when all have an equal opportunity to obtain them; but who shall judge of this?

The objection to premiums does not of course lie to the giving of a keepsake to a pupil to commemorate his birth-day or some interesting event in his history, nor to the distribution of presents by the pastor or superintendent to all the school according to the age, &c., of each scholar, nor to the gift of a particular volume, to meet the peculiar cir-

cumstances of an individual. It may be questionable, however, whether the practice adopted by some teachers who are blessed with abundant means, of making presents to their pupils, does not operate rather to the prejudice of the school at large, than to the advantage of the favoured class. If so, charity would require its discontinuance.

There can be no better mode of urging children to diligence and regularity, than by showing them that these are high duties, which they owe both to God and to themselves, as well as to their teachers. These motives, it is true, do not appeal so powerfully to the selfish feelings as some others ; but they are the only scriptural ones, and these alone can be permanently efficacious. Other motives soon lose their power, and fail of accomplishing their object. When these take effect, it is deep and abiding. The most effective method of promoting the diligence and regularity of the children, is to make the exercises of the school such as will engage their attention, and deeply enlist their feelings.*

Give them to understand the value of the labours of an affectionate and disinterested instructor ; inspire them with a thirst for knowledge ; bring them under an abiding sense of duty ; impart to them a love of study ; let visits be frequent, and add the free use of a good library, and there will be found little

* "My system of discipline," says an experienced superintendent, "is this:—as soon as the names of the pupils are registered, they are understood to be the constant objects of watchfulness and prayer to their respective teachers and the superintendent. The truths of the Bible enforced on the conscience, the motives of the gospel presented in a thousand admonitory and alluring forms, make up the whole system."

need of other stimulants to industry and regular attendance.

The rules of a school should be very simple and concise, and their rigid observance should be required, especially of the older members. If the eldest half of any school conduct themselves with propriety, there is little difficulty in securing the discipline and good order of the rest.

As a specimen of the subject and character of Sunday-school rules, we insert two forms, one of which regards the conduct of the pupil in school, and the other his general behaviour. The object of using the first person is to make it seem a matter of personal obligation.

RULES OF THIS SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

1. I must always mind the superintendent and ALL the teachers of this school.
2. I must come every Sunday, and be here when school begins.
3. I must go to my seat as soon as I come in.
4. I MUST ALWAYS BE STILL.
5. I must not leave my seat till school time is over.
6. I must take good care of my book.
7. I must not LEAN on the next scholar.
8. I must walk SOFTLY in the school.
9. I must not make a noise by the church door, or school door, but must go in as soon as I come there.
10. I must always go to church.
11. I must behave well in the street when I am going to church.
12. I must walk softly into church.
13. I must sit still in my place till church goes out.

14. I must go away from the church as soon as I go out.

RULES OF GOOD BEHAVIOUR FOR THE CHILDREN OF
THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

1. I must be obedient to my parents and teachers and love them for their kindness to me.

2. I must be affectionate to my brothers and sisters, and especially to such as are younger than myself.

3. I must respect old people, and be civil to everybody.

4. I must never mock lame or deformed persons.

5. I must be kind to dumb animals.

6. I must never use bad words, or call ill names.

7. I must avoid bad habits, such as foolish jesting, smoking or chewing tobacco, or using strong drink.

8. I must avoid quarrelling and contention.

9. I must be temperate in what I eat or drink.

10. I must be clean, neat and industrious.

11. I must pray to God and praise him, every morning and evening.

12. I must keep the Sabbath-day holy by reading God's word, attending on his worship, and avoiding all work and amusements.

There are some particular points in discipline, to which special attention seems necessary. Among them the first perhaps is *punctuality*. To secure this, various expedients are employed. Sometimes each scholar has been furnished with a card containing the following matter in large type.

What time does school begin?

It commences in the *morning* at NINE o'clock.
in the *afternoon*, at half past ONE o'clock.

At these times, every scholar and teacher should be in his seat.  THE DOOR IS THEN CLOSED. Every one must therefore leave home in sufficient season to be punctual ; for it is only

To *Punctuality*, then we say,  WELCOME, COME IN.

To *Tardiness*, it is—NO ADMITTANCE.

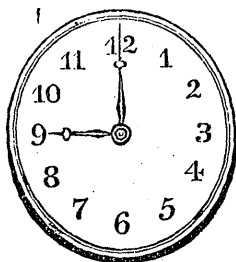
*** The parents, and all who wish to visit the school, are not excluded by this regulation; but admitted at any time with great pleasure.*

We have seen another card, of which the following is a copy.

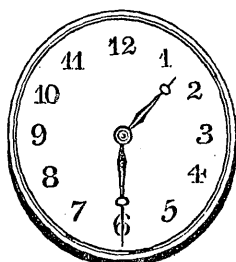
WHAT TIME DOES SCHOOL BEGIN?

In the MORNING at

In the AFTERNOON at



ALL THE YEAR ROUND.



 Always try to be in ten minutes before the time.

In some schools a large card is placed directly in view of every scholar and teacher as the door is opened. Until the hour of beginning, the card displays the words, "I AM EARLY." As soon as the time arrives it is turned, and shows, "I AM LATE." This contrivance for silent rebuke has often been very successful in producing punctuality.

The importance of strict conformity to this prin-

ciple justifies every lawful expedient to insure it. It prevents much inconvenience, and is essential to the order and improvement, if not to the very existence of a good school.

§ VII. *Admission and dismissal of pupils.*—

Children should never be enrolled in, or dismissed from a Sunday-school without the knowledge of their parents and guardians. The attendance of a child is not sufficient evidence of this knowledge. In many cases, especially in cities and large towns, children go from one school to another without even the knowledge of the teacher they leave. Sometimes it is done to avoid discipline, to please an associate, or to gain some personal advantage, or from mere caprice. We do not hesitate to speak of it as a matter of chief importance, that certificates of admission and dismissal should invariably be given, and the date accurately entered on the roll-book; and it should be generally understood, that a youth who has been connected with another school, should bring a certificate of honourable dismissal therefrom, in order to obtain admittance elsewhere. We have spoken of this as a point of great importance—scarcely less so than for church members to have letters of introduction from their own churches to those where they are to fix their future residence. Unless some course like this is pursued by superintendents, many a promising scholar, going as a stranger into a strange place, and there finding no one to lead or invite him to the Sabbath-school, will be found by those who will deceive and entice him to his ruin.

It is a matter of special wonder that scholars are generally as good as they are in city schools, knowing that the worst are the most apt to change

schools, and that so little regard is had to receiving them without a regular dismission. We need not ask for a better way of detecting a boy's character, than to find he has left a school without leave or without applying for dismission.

One form of certificate is subjoined, and is self-explanatory. We need not say that the use of this or any other form of receiving or dismissing scholars must be uniformly observed in order to insure its utility or practicability.

It is the duty of the superintendent to ascertain, as far as practicable, to what place the members of the school remove, from time to time ; they should give them appropriate counsel, and a letter of introduction to the superintendent of some Sunday-school, or to some preacher of the gospel in the place to which they remove.

At one of the Sunday-schools in a western city, two notes were placed in the hands of the superintendent by two little girls, recently arrived from a distant place. The certificates were signed by a gentleman well known in public life ; proved their good standing as Sunday-school scholars in the place they had left, recommended them affectionately to the care and oversight of their new friends, and introduced them at once to a circle of kind religious acquaintances. This practice might be extended advantageously to young men and women, who leave schools or Bible classes, or other religious associations in the country, to take up their abode in the city. Just at the time when the passions are strongest, and when temptations most easily prevail, they go from the affectionate counsel and oversight of their parents and teachers. The excitements and allurements of their new situation

and the connexions they instantly form with the thoughtless, if not with the licentious, soon break up their good habits, unless there is something at hand in the form of a Sunday-school, Bible class, or family influence to restrain and guide them. The particular duty of *teachers* in relation to pupils changing their residence, will be considered in the appropriate place.

§ VIII. *Length of sessions.*—The obvious principle on this subject is, that no violence should be done to the physical or moral constitution. *The Sabbath is a day of rest.* It is to be devoted to religious duties, but not in a form to weary and disgust, rather than expand, elevate and purify the mind; no positive rules can be prescribed to carry out this principle. One session, and that only for half an hour, seems to be but an idle ceremony, while two sessions a day of three hours each, are obviously inexpedient. It is believed, that in the country generally, Sunday-schools assemble but once a day and remain from an hour and a half to two hours. It may safely be held that a single session exceeding two hours, would, under ordinary circumstances, be productive of evil rather than good. Sometimes, when but one session a day is held, it occupies the place of, or rather is made a substitute for the afternoon public service.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

§ I. *General qualifications and duties*—A superintendent is defined to be “one who overlooks others authoritatively.” In the Sunday-school, and, indeed, everywhere, this authority is modified by various circumstances; but wherever it is possessed it involves much responsibility.

A Sunday-school superintendent must be regarded and must regard himself as the head of the school; responsible to God, to the church with which he is connected, to the teachers, scholars, and parents for the general management, order and instruction of the school.

The importance of this station is often greatly underrated, and the duties of the incumbent have been so ill defined, that he is often made the most inefficient member of the whole body. Placed, in theory, at the head of the school, and charged with its control, he in fact does little more than direct the routine of exercises. From a spiritual office, as it should be, it thus degenerates into a merely secular employment.

It ought to be in the Sunday-school as in all other organizations, that the head is really, as well as nominally, the principal. In every employment where numbers are engaged in united labours for the same object, there must be some principal person, who has the chief direction and the chief re

sponsibility. There can be no order, or useful action, without such an arrangement; and it extends through all society. Without a leader, mere strength is, in most cases, useless. There may be abundance of power and of materials, but unless guided by one head, their very number will only create confusion.

When a stranger enters the school-room, he seeks for the superintendent, and should always receive his courteous attention. When a parent brings a child, he commits him to the superintendent. Complaints and inquiries, and all other communications, are made to him. He is, by the common sense of all, looked to as the person by whom the character of the school is to be determined.

As our schools are now generally constituted, the superintendents are regarded as principals, whether they are really so or not; and this arises from the nature of the case. They have the control of the means for improving and promoting the schools. They are at the head of the teachers; they alone can officially assemble them together; they alone can officially direct them. They have an influence with the body of teachers which no individual teacher has with the rest, and this is the influence which is necessary to benefit the schools. They alone have the authority which is requisite to guide, and change and improve.

Among the many important qualifications of a superintendent, we may mention the following:

I. *Good temper, united with firmness and decision of character.*—In the discharge of his duties he will find peculiar occasion for the exercise of patience and forbearance. An unfaithful or inattentive teacher, an unreasonable or discontented parent

have often tried the graces of a superintendent. An even, calm, subdued temper, at the helm, will make sunshine in darkness and smooth water in a tempest.

II. His manners should be gentle and conciliatory. A great diversity of tempers and views prevails among teachers, and still greater inequalities in moral and intellectual character are found in a room full of children. To maintain an impartial authority over such an assembly, and show courtesy and even tenderness towards all, is a rare but very important qualification of a superintendent.

III. He should possess a good degree of information. The office does not require great genius and the highest gifts of education. The history of the world is full of examples which prove that it is not by such might and by such power that God enables his servants to labour successfully for him. The men that have done the most in this service in the world have not been chiefly distinguished by their mental superiority over others. It was the spirit of devotedness, of earnest, absorbing interest in their work, that was the secret of their efficiency. Neither are the men of the best talents for real serviceable labour always the best leaders. A man of inferior ability, but of better tact, may be himself comparatively inefficient in the details of duty, whilst he may guide those who have the strength to perform the actual service. But he should have so much information as will make his intercourse with all classes of parents, teachers and pupils acceptable and profitable. To conduct a prayer-meeting to edification, to examine or exhort a school with skill and without wearying, and to make a useful visit, are among the duties of this officer: and it is obvious that some knowledge of the modes

and subjects of instruction, considerable observation of the world, and not a little tact and versatility are required to discharge them easily to himself or advantageously to others.

IV. A Sunday-school superintendent should have an influential standing in society. The place of the school in public estimation will be on a level with that of its chief officer. If he sustains an elevated character, his name and influence give credit and favour to that with which they are connected; his views and motives are respected; his suggestions are readily entertained; and by accepting the post he adds to the whole institution credit and consequence. If all that is desirable in this respect cannot be had, the nearest practicable approach to it must content us.

V. His Christian character should be clear and fully established. We have said that the great fundamental qualifications of a good superintendent are such as are independent of external advantages. True, humble piety and enlightened zeal are the elements of this character. Let a man only have his heart consecrated to the service, and he cannot be an idle and listless superintendent. He may derive great advantages from natural disposition, and much will depend on the energy and prudence of his character, and the kindness of his heart. But all these are graces which we are encouraged in the very words of inspiration to seek; for, says the apostle, "giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, [the real meaning of which here is **ENERGY**,] and to energy, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity." This list comprises the great requisites of the Christian superintendent and teacher, and it may

be emphatically added, that "if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There are some common mistakes in the choice of a superintendent, to which it may be well to advert. A man may have undoubted piety, and his praise may be in all the church, and yet he may be totally unfit for this office. And, on the other hand, he may be deficient in many of the gifts and graces which distinguish other Christians, and yet be admirably fitted by constitution, education, or habits of life to superintend a Sunday-school. We say not this, that piety may be reduced at all in the order or scale of qualifications for the office, but to illustrate the necessity of caution in prescribing this alone as an invariable or even common test of fitness. Indeed it is not practicable to establish any certain criterion by which to try the point. If we had definite rules as to age, temper, habits, standing in society, kind and degree of knowledge, Christian character, &c.; nay, if we should have a description of the very man by every mark but his name, a single point left unguarded might prove the point of failure. Has the case never occurred in which a superintendent, admirably qualified for his office in every respect above mentioned, has been found defective as a conductor of the devotional or other exercises of the school? Has not a want of judgment in the length and style of prayers and addresses often been like a millstone upon the neck of a school, which is otherwise in a good condition to thrive? How often are these services so protracted and so unappropriate as to exhaust the patience of children, and even of teachers? Who

has not lamented the fretfulness and alienation of heart which have been produced in this way, the mischief of which works itself into all the exercises of the Sabbath?

The superintendent is sometimes (and very properly) selected from among the officers of the church with which the school is connected, and it is very well by this or any other lawful means to draw the sympathies of the church towards the school.* But this advantage will not compensate at all for want of industry, personal influence, tact, courtesy, &c. It is better to secure these, and obtain the other in some other form.

In other instances advanced life, united with established piety, is regarded as the leading qualification for this office. It is very rare, however, that a person in advanced years is able to sympathize readily or coöperate kindly with the young and ardent. It is an unequal yoking together, by which the burden is increased upon both, and the progress of both greatly hindered; their habits of life, associations and prospects are too diverse to promise much advantage from the connexion.

It is always injudicious to make too much of any single qualification. A superintendent may be a good singer and fond of music, and in this way secure, perhaps, undue attention to this object; yet if he lacks order and system in the management of the school, or is superficial in his knowledge of religious subjects, the music of the skies could not

* We have elsewhere expressed our views generally on this point, (pages 38 and 146) and the remark may be made in this connexion that the superintendent especially should enjoy the entire confidence of the pastor and the constituted authorities of the church (if any) with which it is connected.

save it from distraction, nor an angel's tongue make him a profitable superintendent of it. So he may be gifted as an exhorter or a narrator of anecdotes, but if he fails in discipline, punctuality and self-denial, he had better occupy any post in the school than be its head.

The enumeration of these difficulties in the choice of the leading officer shows clearly who should have the power of election. Whatever inconvenience or reproach arises from an injudicious appointment, it is felt most severely by the teachers; and they will be much more likely to select a leader whom they can cheerfully and confidently follow, than those who merely look on. A case may occur, however, in which the constituted authorities of a church should have the appointing power, especially when the school is composed of the children of such church, and is sustained at its charge. Our remark refers to schools as they are generally organized throughout the country.

As to the term of office, we incline to think that the superintendent should be elected annually. The disinclination to remove an incumbent even when good cause exists, is sufficient to prevent injustice, undue haste, or frequent change; and, inasmuch as the well-being, if not the existence of a school may sometimes depend on a change in this office, it is well to have a periodical opportunity to make it, if it be desirable.

§ II. DUTIES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

1. *As it respects the selection of teachers.*— Among the most important and difficult duties appertaining to the superintendent's office is the selection of teachers and the assignment of classes to them.

The means of preparing and improving teachers must necessarily become more and more a subject of anxiety as the capacity of the institution is developed and its influence extended. There is too much depending upon the issue of the enterprise to trust its execution in unskilful or inefficient hands any longer or any farther than is absolutely necessary. Every day should mark some substantial permanent improvement in the system and every part of its administration. So strong has popular sentiment become in its favour, and so fully have its claims to public confidence and support been sustained, that if it fails, it must be through the treachery or remissness of those to whose management it is intrusted.

It is difficult at the outset to secure such instructors as are needed, and the extension of the system has been mainly prevented, in new countries especially, by this circumstance. But if it be not easy to find those who will engage at its commencement, it is next to impossible to call in the additional assistance continually necessary to maintain and improve the school when established. Indeed almost every superintendent of much experience has found himself driven to expedients on the subject before us. His first teachers, inadequate at the beginning, have failed him after a little labour. Repeated disappointments, and sometimes the mere want of a sufficient number of persons to conduct his classes, have fixed his attention upon the most capable of his scholars. Enough has been done to prove that no teachers are equal to those trained in their own Sabbath-school. They never feel that its duties are irksome, for they love its scenes from the very tie of long and early association. They never

question the dignity and importance of their employment, for they have looked upon it from childhood with reverence. They owe their own intelligent views of Scripture truth to its agency—perhaps it has led them to drink at the “fountain of living waters.”

It is obvious that in this department of his official cares, the first business of a superintendent is to make himself acquainted with the character and progress of all his scholars, but especially of those who are older and more advanced in knowledge. Not that the future teacher should never be recognised, and the course of preparation begun in earlier childhood, but his first attention must be turned to those of an age permitting them soonest to be brought into action. Let him select in his own mind with great deliberation, such as he considers most largely endowed with the moral qualities fitting them for the intended duty. Here his discrimination and judgment will be put in full requisition. Where he has reason to believe the scholar is truly pious, he may well hope, with the aid of Christian motives, to train him to any kind and degree of moral excellence.

If he observes the younger children fond of and habitually hanging around an older scholar, he may feel assured that the latter possesses peculiar facilities for interesting, informing, and governing a class. So quick is the infant mind to discern the points of character which engage and control it. A devotion to their duties as pupils will not of course be overlooked in his estimation of those whom he would prepare for teaching; and by the accuracy of their recitations, and the earnestness and pertinency of their questions, he will be able to form

some idea of their capability of becoming intelligent instructors. But we will not dwell in detail on particulars which must be confided to the discretion of an experienced superintendent. Having selected his candidates, without revealing his intentions to them, he may afford them every opportunity of adding to their stock of knowledge; at one time by conversation, at another by the loan of books; and at all times carefully directing them in the choice of the volumes they take from the library. This attention, though obviously particular, will be ascribed to the partiality deserved by the very conduct which led to their selection, and will answer a farther good purpose by exciting others to imitate them. The next step perhaps will be to introduce them gradually to their new duties by calling occasionally upon one or another to fill the place of an absent teacher. On such occasions it is well to be much with them, to watch their course of procedure, to check little errors in the bud, to give them confidence before the class, and insure respectful deference to them on the part of the scholars; to help them in cases of discipline, or rather to prevent such cases from occurring; and, in a word, to enable them to begin aright in laying the foundation of a teacher's habits. Great benefit has been found to result in this respect from allowing them to sit beside teachers of approved and singularly happy talents for their office, such as are ready in illustration and have the faculty of gaining and keeping the attention and the affections of their classes. "*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.*" So one who is much with able, judicious and successful teachers, cannot but learn many useful lessons; imbibe something of the excellent spirit which is

breathling around, and thus be more speedily fitted for their high vocation.

And when at last the young teacher is about to receive a class of his own, we would recommend the superintendent to hold a solemn conversation with him in private, and lay before him distinctly the deep responsibility he is to assume, presenting a high standard of duty for his aim, with a sincere prayer that he may reach and maintain it.

2. *As it respects the children.* When a child applies for admission into the school, the superintendent should inquire whether he has ever been to a Sunday-school, and if so, the cause of leaving it; and if the reasons appear satisfactory, the child may be received on trial; but previously to a regular admittance, the parents should be consulted, or, if possible, attend at the school-room. The rules should be explained, and the child introduced to the school. The parents should be affectionately addressed, as before suggested,* and informed how much depends upon their example and coöperation at home, to render the instructions of the school a benefit to their children.

The name, age, residence, parentage, &c. of every child, with the date of admission, and such other particulars as may be of interest, are to be entered by the superintendent in the RECEIVING BOOK. Some schools require a new scholar to attend a limited number of Sabbaths before his name is permanently enrolled, but if proper deliberation is shown in visiting and consulting the parents and ascertaining the relations of the child to other schools, such a probation may be dispensed with and his name en-

rolled at once. After due examination the child is to be given in charge to a suitable teacher.

§ III. *As it respects the record books.*—The receiving book and its use have been already mentioned. The “MINUTE BOOK” will claim the special attention of the superintendent. In this are to be noted the transactions of each Sabbath, embracing the general exercises, and by whom conducted, the number present and absent, admitted and discharged, the names of visitors, and any interesting incidents or reflections of the day. In addition to these he has his own “ROLL BOOK,” in which is entered the name and residence of each teacher and pupil in the school. On this roll every absence of teacher or pupil is marked, and the superintendent should be satisfied, *in every case*, of the cause of absence. Instances of repeated absence will require a visit, and no name should be continued on the roll *a single Sabbath* after the connexion of the individual with the school has ceased. Nothing is more to the discredit of a school than to have its roll-book burdened with scores of names, while those who bear them are not in regular attendance. In every well-regulated school, a certain term of absence, without excuse, works a forfeiture of the relation.

These three record books, when properly kept, exhibit the progress and improvement of the school from time to time, and should be so minute as to show precisely what relation that particular school bears to the grand system of which it is a part. If such a record had been kept in all our Sunday-schools from the beginning, it would be very gratifying and animating now to look back for the names, and character and conduct of those who

twenty or thirty years ago were enrolled in the catalogue of Sunday-school children, and who are now heads of families, municipal officers, teachers and superintendents of schools, missionaries and ministers of the gospel. We could collect annals from such a source that would make the Christian's heart swell with joy.

§ IV. *As it respects the school at large.*—In the general relations of the superintendent, he is to be to the whole school (teachers and pupils) what each teacher should be to his class. Of course he should inform himself of the character of each teacher and each scholar, and for this purpose may usefully employ a private catalogue of the school, containing such facts as inquiry or observation may furnish for the guidance of his own conduct.

The influence of the superintendent over the teachers is one of his most important means of success. He ought to make them his particular care, and to extend to them the same degree of attention which he expects they will give to their respective classes. By frequent conversation on the subject of the school, he should ascertain whether the teachers are sufficiently impressed with the responsibility of their station; he should exhort and encourage them individually and privately; frequently urging them to reflect on the important question, "Thou, therefore, that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"

To do this profitably he should himself be the best teacher in school. He should acquaint himself intimately with the duties of teaching, and with the improvements in education, that his school may enjoy every facility and advantage in their studies.

Not only should he possess this general knowledge, but he should study the weekly lessons appointed for the school, that he may be enabled to examine the children occasionally, or instruct the teachers, or explain and illustrate the truths they learn. The case has been known, in which the superintendent of a Sunday-school has given two whole days, every week, to the business of preparing himself for the duties of the school. In some schools it is customary for the superintendent to examine the pupils every Sabbath, or in a month's lessons, and the practice affords him one of the best opportunities he could ask for impressing truth upon the minds of all the members. He may be called upon unexpectedly to explain some passage of the lesson, or to instruct a class; for though it is obviously impracticable for the same person to be superintendent and teacher at the same time, yet, in the occasional absence of one or more teachers, he may profitably collect the destitute class or classes, and instruct them for a single session. The superintendent is expected to lead in the devotional exercises of the school. In the selection of the proper scriptures to be read and the proper hymn to be sung, and in preparing his mind to conduct the devotional services, much reflection and meditation are requisite.*

The superintendent should establish a stated meeting of the teachers for prayer and examination of the lesson, and feel that the continuance of it, the attendance of teachers, and its profit and interest, depend mainly upon himself. There can be no

* For the character of these exercises, see page 322.

doubt that the influence which a devoted superintendent can exert through these meetings over the character of teachers not professedly pious and over the general interest of the school, is beyond estimate. The superintendent should devote particular attention to the library, be careful that all the books are of a religious and appropriate character, that such additions are made as the wants of the school require, and that an interest in it is sustained among teachers and pupils. In some schools he has the exclusive right of selecting the books and appointing the librarian.

But aside from these specific duties, the great power of the superintendent lies in the spirit and energy which he shows in all his official acts. In a thousand ways which cannot be defined a general impression is made. There is a blending of confidence, and esteem, and sympathy, and friendship, which makes up his mysterious power. There is a close alliance of Christian affection and confidence subsisting between him and the teachers, which binds them in a holy brotherhood. He does not usurp an authority over them as if he were elevated above them; yet they feel the importance of acting under him and with him, as their principal. They mingle as fellow disciples, as friends, as brethren, as united in labour and responsibility; and here is the source of that influence upon which their mutual usefulness is based.

But the superintendent should be far from supposing that his only or principal duty is connected with teachers. This is a sentiment which is doing extensive injury. Superintendents have thought that their province was the general direction of the school, and that if each class is provided with a

teacher, their task is done. To say nothing of the general order of the school, we have remarked that in matters of discipline much depends on the tact of the superintendent. This is the secret of the matter. A stranger comes into a Sunday-school, and sees in its well ordered and disciplined ranks, in the stillness and solemnity of the place, in the fixed attention of teachers and pupils to their respective duties, and the general appearance and demeanour of all concerned, that the school is under some extraordinary influence. He whispers to the superintendent, and asks for something which he can put in his pocket and carry away, and use where he lives, that they may have just such a school there; and he supposes that a blue covered pamphlet (like a manual or table of rules and orders) will be given him that will explain the whole matter. But he is in error. The truth is, if he wants that school, or one like it, he must have that superintendent or one like him. There is no code of laws, manual or directory, that will prove a substitute for such a superintendent or furnish a prescript for such a school.

Corporeal punishment being inappropriate to the design and character of a Sunday-school, it is difficult to substitute other effectual modes of correction, especially for those who are subjected elsewhere to stripes. In such circumstances the promptness and steadfastness of the superintendent will be tried. Nothing is more discouraging than indecision and heedlessness in the governing officer, whereby disorder and misrule are introduced. By ready and skilful action, order, respect and obedience, and of course the quiet and comfort of all concerned are insured. An active and attentive mind, self-pos-

sessed and of quick discernment, will need no specific rules of discipline, and a mind lacking these qualities will be incompetent to control others, though possessed of a volume of rules.

Again—It is not uncommon for a superintendent to be personally a stranger to the children. This is a ruinous defect. As well might the president of a college, or the head of a seminary, think himself discharged from responsibility because the pupils were furnished with professors and tutors. Let this impression be strongly felt, that each child is committed especially to the superintendent, and that he must, therefore, watch over them, “as they that must give account.” In this he has assistants; but he should know that they are such as may be safely intrusted with the charge; and whatever may be his just confidence in their skill and fidelity, he will not cease to remember that the scholars are still under his supervision. The teachers have their share of responsibility, but it does not diminish the superintendent’s. He will, therefore, make it a point, if possible, to know each scholar so as to call him by name when they meet. He will, at any rate, know the progress of each scholar; he will be seeking to ascertain what impression the truth is making, and whether there is any progress towards the object of their religious instruction. His duties and responsibilities to each of these souls, will fill the meditations and the prayers of many an hour; they will be the great subjects of his anxiety and his care, that he may rightly discharge the sacred service to which his Master has called him. It is a spiritual service; souls are committed to his ministry.

It would be impossible to enter into the details

of the duties of such superintendence as is here hinted at.

Whatever the spiritual duty of a pastor is to his flock, is *his* duty; whatever solicitude a devoted pastor feels for the salvation of his charge, the superintendent should feel for the salvation of *his*; and whatever faith, and prayer and labour may seem to be demanded in the one case, are quite as requisite in the other.

General care, merely, will not be sufficient, nor does it meet the obligations of the office. To direct the school wisely, the superintendent must know what are its materials, what its condition is, and what changes take place. This cannot be learned by general inquiry from teachers. Something more is necessary to be known than whether a scholar is punctual in his attendance, and prepares his lessons. There can be no proper arrangement of the pupils into classes unless the superintendent is acquainted with the capacity and knowledge of each; and without knowing something of their individual character, dispositions, situations during the week, and such particulars, he cannot discreetly direct their course of instruction. Above all, his spiritual influence loses inconceivably if he does not know enough of the mind, habits, and moral character of the pupils to apply his personal advice and assistance to their cases. All this is indeed part of the teacher's duty, but it is also important to be known by the superintendent, if he desires to act intelligently and not at hazard.

The more the kind and pious spirit of the superintendent pervades the school, and the more his influence is felt by each teacher and scholar individually, the stronger will be the common bond which

unites all in attachment to him and to each other. His superintendence will not be an interference or interruption, but will regulate and aid the whole.

If the superintendent keeps aloof from them, he will be sure to commit mistakes in the general attempts he may make to do good. His conversation, and addresses, and prayers and intercourse will not be such as will awaken the attention of children, and make a desirable impression. But the more he mingles with them and watches their hearts, and comes down to the feelings and habits of childhood, the deeper will be his interest in his station, and the better able will he be to perform his part. Never, indeed, does any one who is engaged in the training of children feel the true spirit of the office until he knows and loves the heart of childhood; till he can sympathize and rejoice with little children, and delight to have his own feelings freshened and renewed by mingling with theirs. If we should carry more of the parental, or of the brotherly and sisterly feeling into our schools, and less of the mere instructors and disciplinarians, our employment would be more useful and happy to all parties.

§ V. When several schools are established in the same district or vicinity, the duties of their superintendents respectively, are not confined to their own particular charge. They should know each other, and each other's schools. They should avail themselves of their mutual experience and judgment in regard to different plans of instruction and discipline, and to every thing in which the welfare of the cause is concerned. It should be esteemed a great privilege that such facilities of communication may be enjoyed; and that at the monthly concert they may

unite as worshippers and suppliants before the same throne of grace for a common blessing.

Men in all pursuits and professions find it important to meet together and maintain a professional fellowship. Would there not be the same feeling in our superintendents if the same deep interest were felt in their pursuits? Yet the cause has always suffered, especially in cities, from this very want of union and concert among the active conductors of Sunday-schools. They are in a great degree strangers to each other, and to their respective schools; and on this account the improvement of all has been greatly retarded.

Much good has been found to result from a monthly or quarterly meeting of superintendents. A practical writer urges on all superintendents the propriety of their making themselves acquainted with the best plans which are in use for conducting schools; and in order to do this, recommends frequent and familiar intercourse with each other, so that they may be mutually instructed by a reciprocity of feeling and information. Both will be of obvious use, as by mutual encouragement they will be each benefited and furthered in their interests and devotedness to their duties; at the same time much will necessarily be suggested in regard to plans of operation.

The same writer particularly adverts to the value of an understanding among superintendents in the same place, as to the admission and dismissal of scholars, the time of opening and closing schools, and the general system of rules and orders.

The offices of superintendents and teachers are entirely distinct, and there are duties enough appropriate to each to occupy the full attention of those

who fill them. Yet, still there are some respects in which their duties are concurrent, and without similarity of views and feelings, no great good can result from their labours. They need unitedly to keep in view the great object of pursuit. This is, in humble dependence upon divine grace, to impart that religious knowledge, to produce those religious impressions, and to form those religious habits in the minds of the scholars which shall be crowned with the salvation of their immortal souls; or, in other words, to be instrumental in producing that conviction of sin—that repentance towards God—that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—that habitual subjection in heart and life to the authority of the Scriptures which constitutes at once the form and power of genuine godliness. Less than this will be below the requirement of the Bible, and come short of the great end for which it has been given us. To accomplish this, what labours are too severe, what self-denial too irksome, what zeal too ardent? Think how much might be effected in this country for the advancement of religion, if our superintendents were constantly under the influence of such views of their office as we have attempted to present. How soon would the flame of zeal spread to the teachers, and animate the multitude who are under their care! What an impulse would it give to the feelings of the whole church, if a band so numerous and influential as the superintendents and teachers are in their respective congregations, should set such an example of Christian life and Christian devotedness.

§ VI. As to the number of superintendents in the same school, it is obvious, we think, that the permanent prosperity of the school will be best con-

sulted by placing it under the exclusive control of one individual. If it is too large for one, it can be divided; where there are several superintendents or directors, the responsibility is divided, collisions will occur, partialities and jealousies will easily spring up, and the school will insensibly dwindle and decay. These remarks apply of course to a school of either sex exclusively, and not to a school of both sexes. In this last case it is better (if accommodations are furnished) to have two schools, and of course two superintendents.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

§ I. *Of the duties and relations of ministers of the gospel to Sunday-schools.* We shall never know how rich a boon Heaven has bestowed on the world in the institution of Sunday-schools till the motto of Christendom in relation to them shall be—**ACTION, GENERAL ACTION, CONSTANT ACTION, ACTION IN ALL THE RELATIONS OF LIFE.**

In the section on the organization of schools we have already expressed at some length our views of this subject.

There can be no question that ministers and officers of churches, and the whole body of the elder members of our churches, both male and female, are much less generally engaged in the prosecution of Sunday-school labour than could be desired and

expected. We do not mean by this that ministers or other officers of churches should all take classes, and engage to be regular attendants on the exercises of the schools. This in some cases might not be practicable ; but there are offices connected with the school and its support which they might well fill ; and if they only regularly visited the place of teaching, and thus practically showed their interest in the progress of affairs there, the effect would be most obvious and salutary.

We are not disposed to attribute the apparent willingness of the church and her officers to leave the Sunday-school to itself, to indifference or carelessness on their part. Of two things we are persuaded : 1. That where ministers and churches have entered with zeal and spirit into the oversight and labour of Sunday-schools, the utmost harmony and kind feeling have prevailed, and great prosperity has attended the institution : and, 2. That very often such oversight and labour are forborne from the impression (unfounded as it may be) that they are not desired, or might be esteemed officious.

Every truly pious and intelligent Sabbath-school teacher will desire to act under the inspection, as well as with the entire and cordial approbation not only of the parents, whose children he instructs but of the minister in whose congregation he labours, and whose auxiliary he desires to be in gathering and feeding the lambs of the flock of Christ. So far from considering such inspection an interference, or such coöperation an indication of want of confidence, those teachers who are every way best qualified for the work, will feel their hearts cheered and their hands greatly strengthened by it. It will encourage them in all their endea-

vours to teach their children the fear of the Lord, and it will stimulate them to greater diligence in qualifying themselves for the work, and will animate their supplications for the blessing of God upon their efforts.

The work of training up the rising generation for the service and glory of God, without interfering with parental and individual obligation, or in any way diminishing the mighty sum of it, is the duty of the church, the whole church of Christ; nor can she transfer her solemn responsibility to other hands. To neglect her duty and to leave her work to others, will be to betray her trust, thin her ranks, cloud her glories, dry up the stream of her richest mercies, and call down the displeasure of her insulted Lord.

We regard it as one of the most interesting and peculiar features of the Sunday-school system, that it provides a place in which the services of laymen may be most efficiently employed for the building up of the Redeemer's kingdom, without encroaching in any manner upon the rights or province of his appointed ministers. And it is another feature, perhaps not less interesting and peculiar, that the influence of the church and her ministry can be brought to bear fully and happily upon the Sunday-school without any undue interference. If, on the one hand, ministers and other officers of churches would interest themselves in the plans and proceedings of the Sunday-school, giving to them a prominent place among the objects of inquiry and interest, and regarding them, in works as well as in words, as the hope and stay and crowning grace of the church; and if, on the other hand, the Sunday-school would look to the church and her ministry

for counsel and coöperation, and cherish towards them a spirit of unvarying kindness and confidence, there is reason to believe that the relations of both would be greatly improved.*

It is through the teachers chiefly that the influence of a faithful, discreet, intelligent ministry is

* In confirmation of these views we may cite the resolutions on this subject, passed by the Sunday-school teachers' convention, in 1831.

Resolved, That it be respectfully recommended to Sunday-school teachers, where circumstances will admit of it, to consult with and seek the approbation and coöperation of the church and its ministers in the formation and prosecution of their plans, and to endeavour as far as possible to enlist them in the active service of the institution.

Resolved, That whenever it is practicable, the teachers of the Sunday-school should form themselves into a class for the purpose of instruction from the minister with whose charge or congregation the school is connected, provided that such an arrangement does not interfere with the weekly meeting of teachers by themselves for mutual improvement.

Resolved, That the direct influence and coöperation of the gospel ministry are indispensable to the complete success of Sunday-schools.

Resolved, That this convention do earnestly desire that ministers and older members of churches will engage, so far as circumstances allow, in the active duties of the Sunday-school, and that they will give to this branch of benevolent enterprise that place in their prayers, labours, counsels, and arrangements to which its importance to the kingdom of Christ and the welfare of man entitles it.

Resolved, That ministers may most effectually advance the cause of Sunday-schools if they will use all proper means to interest parents in the course of instruction and moral discipline pursued there, particularly by making the exercises of the school (where practicable and expedient) the subject of public discourse on the Sabbath, or a weekly lecture, and by making the Sunday-school, and the duty of parents in relation to it, a matter of conversation in families in their professional visits

felt upon the school, and it is the ministry chiefly who give the tone to the Sunday-school feeling of the church. It is a matter of the first importance, therefore, that all these parties should understand and advance the common interest. All of us are but subordinate agents in the prosecution of the work, and we should rejoice that the institution we cherish is so manifestly sustained and prospered by the unchangeable Being on whose promises the church itself rests her hope of final triumph and glory.

§ 11. *Of the relation of parents to Sunday-schools.* There is no greater error than to suppose that Sunday-schools abate in the least degree the obligations of parents to train up their children in the way they should go. We do not believe, however, that this error is so general as many seem to suppose. There may be some few cases in which parents are disposed to regard the Sunday-school teacher as superseding them, and that their duty is done when they send their children punctually to the school; but the probability is, that in a great majority of cases the child would be without any moral or religious training at all, were it not for the Sunday-school teacher. The desirable state of the case seems to be this: 1. That those parents who are able and willing to attend to the religious education of their children, should do it, and regard the Sunday-school only as affording peculiar facilities of instruction of which it is worth while to avail themselves, over and above all domestic training;* and, 2. That those parents who are

* It is important that children who enjoy these advantages should attend the Sunday-school as an incitement to such as are destitute of them, to attend also.

unable or disinclined to their duty should be aided in or excited to its discharge by the kind offices of a faithful Sunday-school teacher.

The legitimate influence of Sunday-schools on the parental relation is, to increase the responsibility of the parent, and to take away the apology for negligence and indifference which might otherwise be offered. The Sunday-school teacher's language to the parent is, "I am willing to devote myself, and such attainments as God has enabled me to make in human and divine knowledge, to your aid, in the education of your child, by taking him and half a dozen other children to a school-room, on every Sabbath, and teaching them by approved principles, to read, understand, and obey the Bible. There, you know, we have maps, cards, pictures, and other sensible illustrations of the lessons. There is a library of books for children of his age. There will be collected fifty or one hundred scholars of different ages and capacities, by which the spirit and interest of study may be excited, and which you will feel it very difficult to excite at home. I cannot fulfil your obligations. My soul cannot be in your soul's stead, either in this world or in that which is to come. But I can, perhaps, help you in the discharge of your duty; and whatever of counsel, aid or encouragement you will accept from me will be cheerfully afforded."

There is, certainly, nothing in all this that looks like an interference with parental duty; nothing that impairs, in any degree, the force of parental obligation.

And hence, we are inclined to think that much of the apathy into which parents have unhappily fallen on this subject would have existed if the Sun-

day-school teacher had never been known ; and for the rest, we are afraid much of their indifference and neglect may be ascribed to the manner in which teachers have treated them.

But even in families where religious knowledge is regularly imparted to the children, it is, in most cases, in a very imperfect manner. Look into such families, and see if the spirit and sentiment of the Lord's prayer is communicated to the child who habitually rehearses it at his rising up and his lying down. Is the devotion of the heart cultivated by parental effort? Are the children made to understand their relations to God, as immortal and accountable beings, by simple, intelligible, and interesting illustrations drawn from the children's world? We do not mean by these interrogatories to imply that great good does not result from domestic religious instruction, such as it is, wherever it is given ; but does it, in its present character, promise to meet the exigencies of the Christian world? Does it promise a generation of intelligent, enlightened, active, enterprising Christian men and women? We do not ask how it would influence such a mind as Timothy's, when administered by such a mother as Eunice, and enforced by such a grandmother as Lois.*

* The reflex influence of Sunday-schools, on the family, is illustrated by the following testimony of a Vermont clergyman.

"Sabbath-schools do not prevent parental instruction at home, as has been supposed. Nothing has ever been attempted among my people which has operated so effectually to excite parents to their duty. They are constantly accosted by language like this. 'Father, won't you help me prove my question? Mother, won't you find this reference? In this way pa-

We hold, then, that while every effort should be made to improve the character of domestic instruction, parents should be among the first to support Sunday-schools, as affording them necessary aid in the great work of educating their children for usefulness here and happiness in the world to come.

As to the other source of prevailing apathy ; there are few teachers, we fear, who make it a matter of duty to consult with parents, and draw out their views and feelings, and make them understand that the great burden of responsibility for their children's welfare, here and hereafter, is and must be on them. Indeed, we doubt whether in a majority of cases the language of the teacher's conduct will not justify the opinion that the parent has nothing to do in the case. It is probably true, that in thousands of cases the training which is vitally to affect the mortal and immortal interests of their children, is administered by those whose faces, and even names, are unknown to the parents. This is certainly the teacher's fault ; and before any reproach is cast upon parents, or any reproof is administered to them, teachers should be sure that they have clean hands, and that nothing is left undone on their part which may in any wise encourage them in their fancied exemption from labour or responsibility.*

rents are looking up texts, and explaining to their children the duty of filial obedience, the consequences of lying, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, impurity, and the attributes of God, the character of Christ, and the immediate duty of impenitent sinners, &c. &c."

* In the examination of Mr. Lloyd, the Secretary of the London Sunday-school Union, before the committee of the British Parliament on national education, are this question and reply :—

"Do the teachers generally not confine themselves to the

Parents should be particularly invited to attend the Sunday-school monthly concert of prayer, and to visit the school ; and great pains should be taken to satisfy them that they would be kindly received,

mere Sunday inspection of the children, but watch over them during the week ?—The teachers in our best conducted schools consider themselves as a sort of second parents of the children ; if there are ten or a dozen children intrusted to a teacher's care, he endeavours to watch over them as a sort of second father, to visit them at home, to carry on their instruction, to place them out in suitable families where their morals will be looked after ; and if they display any particular talent, to lead them on towards that eminence for which their talents may appear to qualify them."

And we have also the testimony of a very active and intelligent superintendent as to the fruits of such coöperation, and the manner of exercising it.

"I make a point of visiting all the parents at least once in every month. My method is such as to complete this easily. I take my class-book in my pocket and make the necessary investigations, if any irregularities have occurred. I inquire as to the behaviour of each boy at home, his general character and disposition, and give such hints as I may deem necessary. I also enforce the importance of parental example, and the coöperation of parents at home, with my efforts at school. As opportunities occur, I read a chapter, and spend a few minutes in prayer. I always visit them when sick ; and it is amazing what influence these visits give the teacher. They are commonly very gratefully received, and highly esteemed. I have found, that even depraved and hardened characters could not resist the softening influence of kindness and attention. I generally leave a few religious tracts behind me suited to the circumstances of the family, which I find highly esteemed ; and these afford a proper topic for conversation at my next visit. By thus procuring the coöperation of the parents, I find that my usefulness as a teacher is greatly increased. I maintain a salutary influence over the children when they are away from personal observation ; and thus a great part of their time, which might otherwise be misspent is usefully employed. These week-day visitations also afford opportunities

that places are always ready for them, so that no painful embarrassment would attend their visit; and provision should be made to interest them in the exercises. Sometimes (when convenient) teachers might call for parents, and attend them to the school; and as soon as they are accustomed to go, it will be a matter of no great difficulty to retain their affections to the school.

We are to remember that one of the distinguishing marks of the age of the church's glory is, that the hearts of the fathers and of the children should be turned towards each other. This then should be, and is the legitimate tendency of Sunday-schools; and while parents rejoice in the happy effects of Sunday-school instruction, on the minds of their children, they should not forget that the domestic relation is, or should be the centre and spring of the most sacred influences, and that the Sunday-school is designed to supply deficiencies, and not to change relations.*

for conversation as to the temporary concerns of the children, and matters which are not suitable for the Sabbath. I have succeeded in bringing many parents under the means of grace, who had for years neglected public worship; and have also induced some of them to establish regular family prayer."

* The Sunday-school teachers' convention, some years since, adopted a resolution solemnly and earnestly urging upon their fellow-labourers "the importance of regular and frequent visits to the families from which the members of their classes come, not only that they may become acquainted with the domestic habits and associations of their pupils, and manifest a suitable interest in their health and happiness; but also, and more especially, that they may become fully acquainted with the views and feelings of parents, and try to make them understand that on them, and not on the teachers of their children, rests the first, chief, and undeniable obligation and responsibility to train them up for God's service.

It is often necessary for teachers to explain to parents their relations and duties to their children. Sometimes this may be done best by a short tract on the subject. To show some of the leading topics on which explanation would be important, as well as to furnish an illustration of the manner of treating them, we subjoin the form of an address from teachers to parents. It might be sent by one of the children from each family, or left by the teacher in one of his first visits. The name of the parent should be distinctly written on the tract, and he should understand that it expresses the views and wishes of his children's Sunday-school teacher.—

TO THE PARENTS OF ELIZABETH, MARY, AND
CHARLES SMITH.

Dear friends:—Will you be kind enough to read this short message from those who are your friends, and who are trying to help you in a great business. God has seen fit to give you these children; and we know that you love them. When they are troublesome, you sometimes perhaps get out of patience with them, and speak harshly or strike a hasty blow. But if they were really sick you would pity them, and if they should die you would mourn for them.

You have shown by sending them to our Sunday-school, that you wish them to be wise and good, and we would respectfully ask you to consider the connexion between our duties as teachers, and your duties as parents.

Good parents and wise teachers have the same end in view; and when both unite their efforts, they may hope for a blessing from God. It is a very good plan for parents and teachers to consult together respecting the disposition and treatment of

their children, that thus the best means may be devised for their benefit. If, while teachers are using every effort to benefit your children, you should neglect to further their endeavours by your counsels and cares, how can you expect any good? Teach your children then to love and esteem their instructors; while we tell them constantly to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right. Let us both join together, and the work will be more easy.

Very few people can lay up much money for their children. And those children who have it find it a very uncertain dependence. Where one child turns out well with money which is left to him by his parents, ten turn out well without it. Not so with good learning. This no one can deprive them of. If they only learn how to read, it is a great thing. The Bible, that best of books, is then all open before them; they can find useful employment, too, for all their spare time, and will have the less temptation to idleness and vice.

Where is the mother whose heart does not ache when she thinks that her son may become a drunkard or a thief, a companion of rogues and vagabonds? And yet, how many neglect to use the only means of saving them from such an end! How many do you suppose can be found in prison to-day who once had a good home and a good Christian education and were brought up to some regular honest calling? Not one in a thousand.

Home should be your child's happiest place. A noisy, smoky, dirty house can have very little comfort in it. You can be kind to your children and provide for their wants; you can keep them clean, too, and you can reprove and correct them for

using bad words, for quarrelling, for unkindness to each other, for falsehood, dishonesty and other sins so common among children.

And, as to the Sunday-school, you must not think that every thing will be done there which needs to be done for your children. You are bound to see that they attend regularly and punctually. It is very painful to us when we are at our posts in season, to have the children come in late or be often absent; you would not like to be so treated if you were a teacher and gave up your time for the good of others. May you not manage your family concerns so that your children can attend regularly, and if they are absent for good and sufficient cause, will you not let us know what it is, that neither you nor your children may be blamed? If you could come to the school yourselves we should be glad; as every visit shows your interest in the welfare of your children. You can also see that they study their lessons and read their library books with attention, and whatever you can do to favour their good habits and good resolutions we trust you will cheerfully do. But you have other duties to perform.

1. *Set a good example to your children at home.*—Example is more powerful than precept. The young have very sharp eyes to spy out the faults of others, especially of their parents, and they too quickly imitate bad examples. If you profane the Sabbath, or take the name of God in vain, or are given to lying and slander, how dreadful is your example to the children who are constantly observing you! Instead of acting as their best friends, you thus become their worst enemies; instead of leading them aright, you are training

them to evil. You most seriously oppose the good instructions your children receive at school. But we hope better things of you, and that it will be your happiness to see your children gathering around you to sing the praises of God, to read the sacred pages of the Bible, and to talk of the wonderful love of Jesus Christ to poor sinners in dying on the cross for their salvation. Be it your concern to join every morning and evening with your little family in prayer and praise. This will sweeten your cares, and, we trust, produce the best and most happy effect on the minds of your children.

2. "*Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.*" Attend the house of God yourselves, and require your children to tell you the texts, and to give you some account of the sermons they hear.

Never give your children money to buy fruit or sweetmeats on the holy day of God. Do not take your children out to walk or visit on the Sabbath. It may be true that you and your children are much confined in the week ; but this is no excuse, unless you think it of more consequence to please yourselves than God, and that your dying bodies are of more worth than your immortal souls. Besides, how can you expect God to bless you, if you live in disobedience to his holy commands ? He can in a moment deprive you of your health, and all your comforts ; and you may be assured, that in his service you may commit your bodies and souls to him as your faithful Creator. Remember that many of those criminals who have ended their lives on the gallows, have stated that their evil course began with Sabbath-breaking ; beware, therefore, of any thing that might tempt your children to commit this sin, as it leads to almost every other evil.

3. *Consider the great advantage of instruction to your children.* The Scriptures declare, "For the soul to be without knowledge, it is not good," and experience confirms this truth. Perhaps when you were young, you had not so many advantages as your children now enjoy. We often hear persons say, "When we were young, there were no Sunday-schools to teach poor children, and *therefore we cannot read.*" Parents who are so ignorant would do well to try to learn, by going to an adult school, and they will be surprised to find how soon they may learn to read the blessed Bible. Take care that your children read to you some portion of the Scriptures every day, and this will do both you and them much good, and encourage the teachers. Some of you were taught in your younger days, and you therefore know and feel the advantages of instruction. Let your children be the better for this; let them see that you love the Bible yourselves, and that you make it your constant companion. Hear them repeat, and encourage them to learn their hymns, catechisms, &c. These good instructions will be treasured up in their memories, and prove highly advantageous to them.

We consider the instruction which your children receive as most important, as it regards this life. We trust they will acquire such good habits, at school, as will render them industrious and faithful in whatever situation Providence may place them. But your children also possess precious and immortal souls, and the best education for them is, that which is founded on the Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation. Your boys and girls are not likely perhaps to receive great estates or

riches from you; but if they become heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus, they will be better off than if you could give them all the riches of the world. O! what a comfort it would be, to behold your children living to the glory of God! How pleasing when they leave their parents' home, and their teachers' care, to know that they possess the fear of the Lord; for it is this alone which can preserve them from the numerous temptations and dangers of a wicked world. If any of your children should be taken away from you by death, how consoling and delightful to hear them bless God for having given them such kind parents and teachers, to lead them to that Saviour, whose presence alone can cheer them in the hour of death, and prepare them for the glories of heaven.

Mothers, to your care the early and important days of infancy and childhood are more particularly committed. You cannot begin too soon to train the infant mind. Employ the earliest opportunities to give it a good direction. Let your little ones be accustomed to prayer and praise.

Fathers, let it be your care to join with your wives in promoting the present and everlasting happiness of your children. Do not cross or oppose one another in your plans, especially in the presence or hearing of your children. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Parents, let it be your earnest and constant concern, to unite with us as teachers, to promote, by every means, the present, and especially the everlasting welfare of your children. Let this

be the subject of your thoughts, your labours, and your prayers. Use your utmost endeavours to keep your children from bad company ; never let them play in the streets or on the wharves, nor go to taverns, popular elections and race courses ; never suffer them to enter the walls of a play-house, or any other like place of public amusement, remembering that the Bible and experience unite in saying, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise ; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

You are continually approaching nearer to an eternal world, and the hour will soon come when you must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, who will require of you a strict account of your conduct towards your children. Remember this ! Consider the value of the immortal souls of your children ! and fail not to send them constantly to the Sunday-school, while you have the opportunity. Set them a good example. Give them good instructions ; and parents, children and teachers may thus hope to meet together in heaven, there to partake of uninterrupted happiness, and to dwell for ever with the Lord. "For in his presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore."

A. B. *Superintendent.*

C. D. *Teacher.*

§ III. *Of the reciprocal relations and duties of teachers and pupils.* We shall treat of the subject of teaching in a distinct chapter. Our present business is with what may be called the external or incidental relations of the office. Of those which concern the church and the ministry we have spoken, and also those of parents.

The teacher's relations to the pupil are much more direct and intimate than any which have been mentioned, and they require that each should know the other's name and person so as not to meet without instant recognition. Many a child has been a year or more under the instruction of one whose name, in all that period, has not been learned correctly. The teacher who knows each of his class by name, and can distinguish them instantly among any group, has a great advantage over his associate who is ignorant of these particulars. If a man professes to be my warm friend, and yet never recognises me except when I go to his house, and then often forgetting my name, I should seriously question his interest in me. So a Sunday-school child will be slow to believe that his teacher has a very lively interest in his welfare if he never speaks to him, nor knows him except when they meet in school.

The teacher's acquaintance with each of his class should be intimate and familiar, as that of an elder brother or sister with the younger members of the family. He should know the temper, habits and associations, the domestic influences, peculiar temptations and besetting sins of each. If the parents are contentious, or pursue opposite courses in the training of their children; if intemperance, avarice, want, pride, luxury, discontent or atheism bear rule in the household, it is obvious that the counteracting power of the Sunday-school should be brought to bear in the most direct and exact form. A close observation of facts has led to the belief that full half the children who are committed to our houses of refuge, or other reformatories for juvenile delinquents, have been brought up by parents who were utterly opposed to each other in the princi-

ples of government and discipline, if indeed they had any principles at all. No wonder that under such an influence they should become disobedient and perverse. The trials of many children are such as few adults are called to endure. An intemperate, ill-humoured father—a thriftless, improvident, gossiping mother—a brawling and slovenly house will furnish abundant secondary cause for much of the depravity of the present day. The story of the wrongs of children is yet to be told.

To apply the corrective to these evils, the existence and operation of them should be well understood, and these are to be learned only by frequent visitations, by closely observing the developments of character, and by proper inquiries of daily teachers, associates and friends.

The course above pointed out is necessary, moreover, to create and to strengthen from week to week a bond of union in interest and affection between the teacher and the pupil. This is done mainly by faithful instruction and kind oversight. The results of such an attachment, as they affect the teacher, are of the most happy nature. We could fill a considerable volume with instances in which, after the interval of many years, the Sunday-school and the instruction received there has come to mind in seasons of adversity, and though parents, brothers and sisters were on the right hand and on the left, the teacher whose kindness was there experienced has been sought out, and his prayers, counsel and sympathy asked as precious above that of all other earthly friends.

And, on the other hand, the restraint of the pupil and the motives to virtue and good deeds which spring from this relation are all-important. It

would not be difficult to show that much of the pauperism, wretchedness and desperate criminality of men results from the inward conviction, "*No man cares for my soul.*"

It has always been held out as one of the collateral advantages of the Sunday-school institution, that a friendly interest is created in the teacher for the temporal welfare of his pupils. The Sunday-school *theory* is, that every scholar is sure of a friend who will visit him in sickness, procure help for him in want, and to whom he may apply for advice in any emergency. How far this beautiful scheme is carried into practice we do not know. We are acquainted with many instances in which teachers have been the means of doing great good in this way; but we fear there is not generally that feeling of interest on the part of teachers which brings them into acquaintance with the social condition of their pupils.

Yet a wide field of benevolence may be supplied by such an agency. There is a vast number of boys who are separated from their parents, and whose situations as apprentices, &c. are most unfavourable to their moral character. They may be the daily companions of the profane and licentious, and be training up in their society for utter ruin. They may be engaged in occupations which are themselves immoral, or involve them in peculiar temptations. In many instances, parents have apprenticed their children unconscious of any such exposure, or have been compelled to take advantage of any situation that offered. They would welcome as benefactors the teachers who would apprize them of the danger of their children, and at the same time assist them in improving their condition. The fa-

your of a respectable teacher would be a recommendation of a lad to a well-disposed employer, and his kindness be an incitement to any child with a spark of ingenuousness. Every teacher who has this description of pupils under his care should know what is the situation of each one in this respect. He may exert a friendly influence which will be no infringement of the privileges of the master or parent, and be the means of saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins.

Some years ago a Sunday-school teacher called to inquire if we knew any gentleman in New York connected with a Sunday-school, who would be likely to interest himself in two little girls who were about removing thither, and who had been some time her pupils. Their parents were irreligious, and rather thrifless, and they were going among strangers and into temptations, and she was very anxious to have them transferred to the oversight of some Christian friend. We gave her the letter of introduction which she desired, and afterwards learned that on the very first Sabbath after their arrival they were placed in a good school, and that the letter had been of great service in calling the attention of benevolent people to their need of employment and sympathy.

We have frequently received letters from the religious friends of young men removing into our vicinity, commending them to such Christian oversight as they might find of service to them. And though in such cases a connexion was not always formed with a Sunday-school or Bible class, yet the care and anxiety of their former friends which are thus seen to follow them wherever they go—the restraint imposed upon them by the thought

that they are still watched, and the opportunity to secure friendship and counsel in their new situation are all instrumental in deterring them from the ways of sin and death.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE PERSONAL DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS.

§ I. THERE can be no question that (other things being equal) the man who knows most of Christ, is best able to instruct others in the knowledge of him.

The history of Sunday-schools, however, furnishes conclusive evidence that the labours of those who are not thus qualified are acceptable to God, and are not only crowned with success,* but re-

* The following illustrations are well authenticated:—I know a small town a good way in the country, where some years ago a small church was organized, and soon after a Sabbath-school was established in connexion with it. There were but four willing to engage in the effort of sustaining the school, and frequently it languished, and for a while seemed to die; but a new effort would revive it, and encourage the hope that it was doing some good. In these efforts to support the school, none were more prominent than a young married female, who was not a professor of religion, but felt anxious that the school should be sustained. She at once, on removing to that town, gave her influence to support the school. It is now five years since she took her class. A few months since I visited the school, and learned from her own lips that she has had sixteen different scholars in her class during the five years

warded a thousand fold.* It may be stated as a general truth, that while the proportion of teachers to children is as one to six, the proportion of teachers converted during their connexion with the Sunday-school to that of scholars, is as five to six.

Of these sixteen scholars, fourteen were hopefully pious, and the remaining two, with the teacher, are under deep religious impressions. Since my return I learn that this teacher, in company with several of her scholars, has made a public profession of religion.

* In 1830 we became acquainted with the following facts:—An attempt was made in June, 1826, to establish a school in Springfield, (Ky.) Few could be induced at first to offer as teachers or scholars, but those few went on perseveringly in the discharge of their duty; but one Sabbath having since intervened without the school being regularly opened. A gradual increase of teachers and scholars was the result, until it embraced almost all the children in the place. About twenty-five persons had been concerned as teachers since its commencement, but one of whom was a professor of religion at that time, and but one of all that have been thus concerned is now a non-professor.

The late Rev. Mr. James, Rector of Christ's Church, Philadelphia, made the following statement at a public meeting which he addressed a short time before his death.

“A young man who had been piously educated, and whose religious impressions had been strong in early life, while at college mingled in gay society and with worldly companions; so that in a short time seriousness left him, and he ceased from prayer. He removed to a distant city, and commenced the study of the law. While thus engaged, he became acquainted with a pious young man who was superintendent of a Sunday-school. After a short interval his friend left the city, and he was requested to supply the place of superintendent; as it was supposed that he, being a graduate, would be competent for the station. After much persuasion he reluctantly consented; and the Lord's-day found him in the school, entirely unacquainted with the duties to be discharged. He asked what was to be done, and was told that he must open the

Remarkable as this fact appears, a very slight examination of the matter will show that it is all very natural.

Whoever has attempted to teach others any principle of human, or divine science, has found how soon the effort reveals his own ignorance. Let a Sunday-school teacher, for example, strive to impress on the mind of a child some idea of the rich mercy of God, and the greatness of the love where-with he has loved us in giving his Son to die for us. He would, of course, in preparing himself for such an exercise, look at man,—the *object* of this rich mercy and surpassing love, and the state in which it finds, pities, and redeems us; and he would look too, at the price of our ransom, and the amazing display of the attributes of the Godhead, in all that preceded, attended and followed the stupendous work of human redemption. In such a course of study, would it not be difficult for him to avoid the conviction, that he himself is involved in the universal condemnation, that the wrath of God abides on himself, and that there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby he himself must be saved? Surely it would. But he comes to his class. Here his business is to lead

school with prayer. He started and turned pale. He had been taught by his mother to pray, but he had forgotten how. He had not prayed for himself. He had engaged, and would not retire from the work. For some weeks he suffered the lashes of a guilty and awakened conscience, until at length, by the assistance of the blessed Spirit, he was enabled to give up all for Christ. He retained his office of superintendent for more than a year; then at length, after a course of theology, received holy orders, and blessed be God! he has the satisfaction of addressing this assemblage."

children to love and serve God—a holy God. Among the obligations to do this, he presents to them that which springs from the love of God, exhibited in giving his only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die for us. He enlarges on this exhaustless theme, and urges with affectionate earnestness the claims of one so rich in mercy, to our supreme love and undeviating obedience. Can he do all this without a thought that these motives have never influenced his own heart? that he is still halting between two opinions? that he is still dividing his services between two masters? that he is still hazarding his immortal interests upon an existence which may terminate in an hour? Will he not be led to ask, “how shall I escape if I neglect so great salvation?”

It is also an interesting fact attending this subject, that in many instances the labours of teachers who were not professors of religion have afforded an example of diligence, sobriety, and punctuality, which has silently but severely reproofed the sluggishness and worldliness of those who were nominally the people of God.

A good general rule on this subject may be this. That a profession of religion is desirable in every religious teacher; but when *an intelligent, well-informed person of unexceptionable character and conduct pledges himself to discharge the duties of a teacher*, there is no sufficient reason for declining his services on the ground that he is not a professor; and on the other hand, if a professor of religion proposes himself as a teacher, and there is reason to apprehend that he would prove deficient in some of the essential qualifications or duties of the office, his services should be declined notwith-

standing he sustains a visible and perhaps real relation to the people of God.

§ II. Three things may be regarded as necessary to success in this vocation.

1. A clear and thorough knowledge of the things or subjects to be taught.

2. Skill to adapt instruction to the capacities and circumstances of the pupil; and,

3. Delight in and devotion to the employment.

Knowledge cannot be communicated by those who do not possess it. Knowledge possessed by one who has not skill to communicate it, is "like a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed." And even where knowledge and the power to transmit it are found, there must be delight in the employment of teaching, or it will prove a wearisome and half-done labour.

1. Under the first head, it is not inconsistent with what has been before advanced on this subject, to remark that consistent piety should be regarded as a primary qualification. Every grain of influence which true piety casts into the school is of inconceivable value. In this view, if in no other, is it exceedingly desirable that Christians of an older class and of mature religious character, should become teachers. But, as before intimated, when a sufficient number who have this important qualification, and are suitable in other respects, cannot be had, the school should feel itself under deep obligation to any sober-minded person who is willing to encounter the sacrifices and self-denials of the teacher's office. Such an one, though not possessing a knowledge of the power and efficacy of divine truth, obtained through its regenerating influence upon his own heart, may communicate just views

of the *facts and principles* of our holy religion; and this is among the important duties of a Sunday-school teacher; and to discharge it properly, he must be familiar with the various branches of biblical science. In other words, he should have a correct, thorough, and well-digested knowledge of the Scriptures. To obtain this, the sacred volume must be studied with much care and patient labour.

The course of study will embrace :

I. Sacred Biography.*

II. Geography and Chronology.†

* On this subject the teacher is furnished by the American Sunday-school Union, with the aid of a cheap *Scripture Biographical Dictionary*. This is an entirely original work, containing a sketch of the life of every individual mentioned in the Scriptures, of whose history we have any knowledge. There is added a complete list of the names of all persons mentioned in the Bible, with the proper pronunciation, and a reference to one or more texts in which they occur. The list was prepared by a clerical gentleman, who also edited the volume. 214 pp 18mo. 50 cents.

In addition to this, they publish extended biographies of all the most eminent of Scripture characters, male and female. Among the subjects are Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, David, Esther, Ruth, Nehemiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Peter, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and Paul.

† The American Sunday-school Union furnish a valuable help to the inquirer in the former of these subjects in the volume of *Sacred Geography*, prepared expressly for the society by Rev. Messrs. J. W. and J. A. Alexander, and also in a great variety of maps, large and small, engraved to illustrate different portions of Bible history. The geographical articles in the *Union Bible Dictionary* are prepared with great care from the latest authorities, and illustrated with two new and original maps. Chronological facts are generally given in connexion with the persons or events to which they refer.

III. Jewish and Oriental Antiquities.*

IV. Natural History.†

For example, see the articles, EPISTLES, JUDGES, KINGS, SCRIPTURE, &c. in *Union Bible Dictionary*.

* On this subject the same society offers the teacher invaluable aid. Among its publications, almost exclusively devoted to it, are the following:

Destruction of Jerusalem, abridged from the History of the Jewish Wars, by Josephus; together with Sketches of the History of the Jews, from their Dispersion. 234 pages. 40 cents.

Scripture Illustrations, explanatory of numerous texts and various customs mentioned in the Bible, with twenty-eight cuts. In two volumes, 120 pages each. 44 cents a vol.

A very entertaining and instructive book on these subjects for a teacher or learner is, *Evening Recreations*, or a Series of Dialogues on the History and Geography of the Bible. The illustrations and explanations are very simple and natural, and the best authorities have been consulted in every case. In four volumes, 20 cents each.

But by far the most valuable treatise is, "*Biblical Antiquities*," by Professor J. W. Nevin. In 2 volumes, 540 pages. 68 cents.

This interesting summary has been carefully examined by very learned Biblical critics; it has received a great variety of important corrections from the pen of the author, and is illustrated by nearly thirty cuts. It has been repeatedly pronounced, by learned divines, to be a masterly production, and an invaluable assistant to the student of the Scriptures.

† Natural History is one of the most interesting if not one of the most important branches of Biblical science. Many of the most sublime, instructive and elegant passages of the sacred Scriptures are destitute of force to such as are unacquainted with this subject. There are several treatises on this science, but they are generally beyond the reach of Sunday-school teachers, and Biblical students, and are encumbered with much learning, which is comparatively unprofitable, except to the professional reader. The American Sunday-school Union publishes a *Natural History of the Bible*, containing authentic and scientific descriptions of the beasts, fishes, birds,

The teacher who investigates these subjects with due diligence, and in the use of such helps as are at this day within the reach of all, is prepared in one respect at least for a profitable discharge of his duty. *He will have a clear and thorough knowledge of the things or objects to be taught*, and this was mentioned as the first essential requisite to his success.

2. The second qualification is, *Skill to adapt instruction to the capacities and circumstances of his pupils.*

The importance of leading the minds of children to attach distinct ideas to the words which are employed in their instruction, either orally by the teacher, or in the books which they read, cannot be too highly estimated. It surely is in vain that the teacher makes the most serious and affectionate addresses to the scholars, or that books, full of the best instruction are put into their hands, unless they understand *the language* which is thus employed.

To be able to talk to children, and to write for them, so as to bring every thing down to the level of their capacity, and both to interest and instruct them is a very rare attainment; and what but comparatively few teachers or authors possess. A child's mind is principally directed, in the early stages of its development, to those objects which are addressed to some one of the senses, and with

reptiles, insects, trees, flowers, plants, precious stones, &c. mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, arranged alphabetically, and illustrated by upwards of fifty engravings. 400 pages, 18mo. 40 cents.

The work was written expressly for the society by a professional gentleman, and is designed especially to supply the wants of Sunday-school teachers.

which it is familiar in the daily walks of life. Our Saviour, in his discourses to the *common* people, who heard him gladly, affords continued and striking examples of these truths.

Children, too, direct their attention mostly to particulars. In order that they may understand what is said to them, they need a specification of persons, of places, of time, and of occurrences. They do not form any distinct conceptions of general, comprehensive, and abstract positions. It is true, that there is a wonderful principle of the human mind, by which it is enabled to generalize and embrace, in one brief assertion, truths of very extensive, and sometimes almost indefinite, application. But this power of generalization is matured slowly and by degrees. It must be carefully cultivated and trained to exercise, and always by a gradual and harmonious induction of particulars. And this is the very point in which so many teachers fail. They have forgotten the process through which their young and ignorant minds had once to pass, in order to take enlarged views of the objects of knowledge, both human and divine; and they cannot go back again to that minuteness, and particularity, and simplicity of thought and of illustration, which is so indispensable in the early and successful instruction of youth.

Yet those who take an interest in this subject, and who are devoted to the business of teaching, and especially the instructors in our Sunday-schools, ought to take more pains in these respects to qualify themselves for their highly important work.

The characteristics of our divine Redeemer's teaching were, plainness, earnestness, honesty, affection, faithfulness, forbearance, courtesy, adapta-

tion to character, and the skilful improvement of common scenes and events for illustration. These the Sunday-school teacher should never cease to imitate.

3. The third requisite to a successful prosecution of this work is, *Delight in and devotion to the employment.*

The Sunday-school invites children to come thither, and receive instruction in things pertaining to their everlasting peace. It invites parents to send thither those to whom they have given being; whose infancy they have watched and nourished, and in whom are bound up their most precious hopes. It invites the church, also, to look thither for her sons and daughters, who shall come up in the place of those who will soon cease from their labours and enter into their rest. And, again, it invites the support and confidence of the community, and promises to raise up a generation of temperate, prudent, industrious men and women; who, in families, in neighbourhoods, and as citizens, shall be faithful and intelligent in the discharge of their duty.

In answer to this invitation, the community have generally favoured the institution. Much patronage has been bestowed upon it in towns and districts where schools have been opened. And its firmest friends and most powerful advocates are amongst the wisest, and best, and most honoured of our citizens. And in return for these favours, a very large number of the best characters which have recently begun, or are now beginning, to give their influence and example to the community, have been formed in Sunday-schools. Temperance, sobriety and industry mark them; and they love and cherish the great interests of mankind.

The gratuitous services of seventy-five or one hundred thousand teachers are contributed, weekly, to increase the number of such characters.

The church, too, has done something for Sunday-schools. Prayers and supplications have been offered in their behalf, accompanied, not unfrequently, with liberal alms. But for the cup of blessings which she has filled for them, they have (as we have already seen) filled to her double.

Parents have found themselves greatly aided and encouraged in the work of training up their households in the fear of God. They have been compelled to ask from Sunday-school teachers that instruction for their children, of which they deeply feel the need, and which they feel unable to bestow.

The system which invites, and has thus far repaid, this confidence of children, parents, the church, and the world, receives its character and consequence, under God, from Sunday-school teachers. Every teacher who takes his seat in a Sunday-school, virtually invites this confidence to be placed in him. He virtually asks children to come to him for instruction in things pertaining to life and godliness. He virtually asks parents to surrender to him the care of their children, for a portion of every Sabbath. He becomes an object of interest to the church, the moment he undertakes to bring lambs into the fold of the great Shepherd. And he virtually promises society, that if he may have the care of this and that individual, at a most important and interesting period of their lives, he will exert himself to the utmost to fit them for the various stations of life, that they may fill them with credit to themselves, and with advantage to the community of which they may be members.

This is the high and responsible place of every Sunday-school teacher. His fellow-labourers, too, cannot but watch his course with a degree of anxiety and interest proportionate to the importance of his work. They have admitted him to the field, and esteem him as one with themselves ; and here, as in the human body, such is the relation of the parts to the whole, that “ whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”

It is feared that many teachers think lightly of their office. Perhaps they confine their preparation for its duties to the Sabbath morning ; and perhaps some enter the school without even this ! The word of God is the book of instruction, and is within the reach of every teacher ; but instead of searching it, meditating upon it, seeking there for truth, praying for wisdom and light from above, to enlighten the eyes of their understanding, that they may teach in all wisdom, and may not be left to teach things which they ought not ; instead of this, they lean to their own understanding ; are satisfied with attending at the appointed place, and near the appointed time ; and while there, feel as if they had only to keep in one place, and hear what is to be heard, and see what is to be seen.

Does it require no laborious, constant, prayerful preparation, to present to the mind of a child the great truths of the Bible, in a manner that shall interest his feelings, enlighten his mind, affect his conscience, and improve his heart ? Is it easy to explain to him, properly, the duties he owes to God and his neighbour, and which he is bound to practise in his childhood, as much as in his riper years ? Is it easy to explain to him the moral con-

dition in which he stands before God ; and to point out to him the only way to escape from the bondage of sin, and the curse of God ? Is it easy to impress upon his roving thoughts and wayward affections, some sense of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved him, and of the obligation which is imposed upon him to give his earliest days, his purest thoughts, the springtime of his life to the Saviour, in return ? Is no preparation of heart necessary to come, on the holy Sabbath, into some holy place, where God's presence is implored, and there to open the holy Bible, and teach children wondrous things out of God's holy law ? Is this a circle of immortal beings, each possessing a soul formed for inconceivable happiness or woe ; passing like a shadow through this world, to the judgment of the great day ? Is he who now sits in the midst of them, to meet them there, and render an account of this and every other hour that he may spend with them ? And has he come here without deep searchings of heart, and diligent preparation of mind, and fervent prayer for the Spirit's holy influence to teach him the statutes of the Lord, that he may teach them to others ?

Be assured, teachers, that your duties and obligations are of no ordinary character. You have taken a place in the vineyard of the Lord, where many eyes are upon you ; and where your unfaithfulness, or neglect, or ignorance, may prove the ruin of some soul that you have invited under your care. Your deficiencies and neglects may pass unnoticed by the labourers around you, and perhaps they may be themselves in the same condition ; but you cannot spend the hours of Sunday-school, without involving yourself in deep and fearful responsibilities.

Your business there is of amazing interest. The intercourse is that of soul with soul ; and it depends very much upon the preparation of your understanding and heart, what the character and result of this intercourse shall be.

Such considerations as these must satisfy us, that it is not a light matter to occupy the seat of a **SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER.**

The means are at hand, as you have seen, to qualify you for the duties of the office. The Bible you can read and study, and this, after all, is the grand instrument. Books have been provided expressly to inform teachers how they may most profitably use the Bible, and how they may most forcibly teach and explain its truths to children.*

If we are not mistaken in our views, teachers have yet to feel that there is something for them to do, which belongs to none but them. The various objects of Christian benevolence, which claim attention and patronage, have engaged, in different degrees, the labours and prayers of God's people ; and we believe it to be the design of Providence, that each of them should have a peculiar and permanent interest in the hearts and prayers of a few, while all of them may share the general interest and support of the church.

It is apparent that faithful Sunday-school teachers do, and necessarily must help forward other kindred objects. They preach temperance to the young, and endeavour to inculcate upon them principles of integrity and virtue and sobriety. They make readers, and create a taste for reading the Holy

* A very intelligible and interesting history of the sacred volume, and rules for its profitable reading, may be found in "The Scripture Guide," by the American Sunday-school Union.

Scriptures, and thus aid the Bible cause ; in the proper use of the library, they are among the most successful tract distributors. They must be missionaries, and they are often the first who are called upon to visit the sick, not only among the children of their care, but their parents and others. And, in their weekly visits of mercy, they must administer to the temporal as well as to the spiritual wants of many, indeed, who have few other friends to care for or help them.

If, however, they would do most for the cause of Christ, they should make *teaching and its incidental duties* the prominent object, the absorbing interest. They should read about it, think of it, pray for it, feel that it is their special business and labour to promote it. It will be found that those who have done most for the world and for their divine Master, have thus devoted themselves chiefly to one object. Those measures which have succeeded best have been promoted by individuals particularly devoted to them.

It is said, too, that there is a niche designed for every man, and if so,

“Happy is he that finds and fills it well.”

If Sunday-school teachers have found their place, let them use every endeavour to qualify themselves for their important duties, and really feel that they can in no other situation do so great an amount of good. And, as we have before remarked, they should be careful not to multiply their engagements and cares so far as to be attempting every thing, while they succeed in nothing.

Is it so with the Sunday-school teacher? Do his constant conversation, the habitual course of his

thoughts, the books he reads, the periodicals or publications for which he subscribes, the meetings he loves most and attends best; do all these speak for him, that he is a devoted Sunday-school teacher?

The case we are considering requires plainness of speech. Too much is depending upon the system of Sunday-schools in this country, to trust an inch of the foundation to pass unexamined, or to spare the severest examination of the whole structure, as it rises upon the view. It is the duty and privilege of a Sunday-school teacher, to support generously and steadily all those grand and sacred enterprises above mentioned, which are no less grand and sacred, perhaps, than his own; but let him remember, with peculiar interest, the peculiar work he has assumed; let him look first at the interest of the cause in which he has embarked; let him feel that this cause HAS A RIGHT to look to him for service which it can expect from none but him and his fellow-teachers. No apology can be received for ignorance, neglect, carelessness, or incompetency; means exist, in abundance, by the use of which, teachers may fit themselves for their duty, and the obligation which rests on them to employ the means, is as solemn as eternity, with its untold interests, can make it; and it may be said to teachers, as a mother has eloquently said to parents, "O, if there is any thing which should constrain us at early dawn; when surrounded with midday cares; at evening hour; yes, and in the watches of the night, to enter into the closet; if there is any thing that should lead us to God, with a fervour of supplication surpassing that with which we plead for our own souls, it is the early conversion of our children."

CHAPTER IX.

EXERCISES OF A SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

§ I. IN seeking for teachers, primary reference should be had to their qualifications as *religious instructors of children*. It is as a system of *religious education* that Sunday-schools claim so high a place in the affections and anxieties of the Christian community. Each child in our Sunday-schools should receive sufficient religious instruction every Sabbath to lead him, under Divine influences, to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Notwithstanding the noisy declamations of ignorant men on this subject, it remains true that no human being in the exercise of right reason, and with an intelligent apprehension of the nature and influence of the religion of Jesus Christ, would deliberately choose for himself or for his child or friend to live and die without it. The soul sustains a sensible, inseparable moral relation to God, and to dissolve it is to part the golden chain which binds man to the end and glory of his being.

There are theorists who regard a very careful and exclusive education as the great thing to be desired; and they would persuade themselves that if a child can be kept from the influence of evil associations and examples, they shall secure its present and future peace. They would treat the moral as they do the physical system; that is, so adapt the climate, diet, dress, exercise, amusements,

&c., as to counteract disease, and preserve the natural and healthful action of every organ ; not considering (and yet how incredible the oversight) that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint ; and that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot sin reigns in the natural man ; that the whole moral world in which we live is filled with pestilence and death, and that to fly from an evil heart and evil influences is to fly from ourselves and from each other and from the world.

The grand error pervading most of our present systems of public instruction is, that they regard the child rather as an intellectual than as a religious being. The time is at hand, we trust, when this error will be corrected, and the Common-school and the Sunday-school will exert a reciprocal influence.* Till this is the case the latter must do double duty. Every hour and moment of Sunday-school time should be rigidly economized, and should have the most direct and close bearing upon the spiritual interests of the pupil.

To this end the opening exercises of the school should be conducted by the superintendent, or under his direction, in a solemn, impressive manner, without interruption or noise.

When the hour approaches for commencing the school, the room is supposed to be in a comfortable state as it regards order, ventilation, cleanliness, and temperature. The superintendent is at his post with a composed mind, a warm heart, a cheer-

* We may say of our most popular schemes of education at the present day, as Legh Richmond said, after visiting Mr. Owen's celebrated school at Lanark, "*There is no reference to Christ in his scheme, and it cannot prosper.*"

ful countenance, and with every arrangement completed for the duties of the session. Each teacher is in his place to receive and welcome the earliest comer. One by one, the classes fill up. Each is impressed, as he enters the room, by the quiet, sober, yet cheerful aspect of the scene. The hour arrives, and the doors of the room are closed, and the school is opened.

§ II. The usual introductory exercises are singing, reading the Scriptures and prayer. The order is varied, however, according to the discretion and judgment of the superintendent.

We have sometimes heard in the street, or at the door of a house, among the groups of playful children, or in the workshop from those of maturer years, the hymns and music with which we have been familiar in Sunday-schools, and there are no sounds more sacred than these. Who thinks of hearing them from the prison-house of crime and infamy—from the circle of thoughtless and dissipated idlers, or from the heart-sickening abodes of domestic misery and contention?

When we have persuaded a Sunday-school child to learn and love Sunday-school hymns and Sunday-school music, we feel as if we had taught him the use of a faculty, the employment of which would bring God into his thoughts; solace his sadness; and accustom him to the contemplation of "joys unseen and hopes unrealized."

It is feared that this important part of the exercises of a Sunday-school is very much neglected; nor is it a matter of much surprise, when we consider what place it really holds in the service of the sanctuary. It is indeed a sad thought, how this delightful science is abused and perverted by people of

mature years; and how injurious is the influence of their example upon children around them. When we go into a Sunday-school, a more grateful sound could not reach the ear, than a cheerful song of praise from a company of tidy, orderly children.

We suppose it will be generally admitted that children who sing or love to hear singing retain for a long time the impression which music makes on the mind, and it is obvious that the impression which words make when associated with music are proportionally deep and permanent. Hence it is that we give singing a high place in the exercises of a Sunday-school *as a means of grace*.

It is well for each pupil who can read to be furnished with a hymn book of his own. There are often powerful associations with particular hymns that are cherished and deepened by something about the book itself.

In selecting the hymn, reference should be had, if possible, to the general subject of the lesson of the day, or to any peculiar event in the season, or in the circumstances of the school or any of its members; and, where it is practicable, the general sentiment of the hymns should be distinctly presented before singing.* For example, suppose the hymn to be

“All hail the power of Jesus’ name,” &c.

It would be well to state briefly (say in three or four minutes,) that this is a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ; that it used to be common for people to go out and meet great men, (as princes and generals,) and

* Sometimes the hymn and tune which are to be sung are mentioned on the previous Sabbath, that they may be practised during the week.

to honour them by shouts and music and by putting on them wreaths or crowns of flowers. Sometimes persons were made kings in this way, as in the case of Solomon, where we are told they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "God save king Solomon, and the people came up after him, and all the people piped with pipes and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them." In this hymn we profess by our praises to worship and adore the Lord Jesus Christ as our king. Do we all wish him to reign over us, &c. &c.

It is very desirable that every child should sing who can do so without disturbing others. Nothing is more inconsistent with the design of the exercise than to have a few chosen singers among the teachers and elder scholars to form a sort of choir. Singing schools for the special instruction of Sunday-school children have been productive of much advantage to families and the community as well as to the school; and it is said, upon competent authority, that one teacher may teach one hundred children to sing correctly by note or word, four tunes, sooner and with less trouble than he can teach one child the alphabet. Few children who know how to sing and love singing will ever be absent from this part of the exercises. We also think it highly important that every Sunday-school teacher should understand well the science of sacred music; possessing at the same time a good judgment and correct taste and ability to form a correct taste in his class.

The tunes should be few, chaste, simple (with a due proportion of quick and cheerful, as well as plaintive airs) and often repeated, so that every

child may become familiar with them, and be able to sing hymns at home or at the daily school. For the sake of relieving the posture, (if for no higher reason,) it is well sometimes to sing standing, especially if the school kneel in prayer. It is the practice of some schools to sing two or three verses every half hour, both for relief from weariness and improvement in singing; and others have devoted Sabbath afternoon exclusively to the exercise of music. We doubt the propriety of this last course, for highly important as we esteem it, music should never usurp the place of other religious duties, and it should never be practised on the Sabbath as an art, but as an offering of praise to the great Jehovah. Of course, it should be attended with the same solemnity as public worship.

§ III. That a portion of *Scripture* should be read *slowly, solemnly, distinctly* and with strong emphasis, as a part of the exercises of a Sunday-school every Sabbath, we cannot doubt. Many children neither read the Bible, nor hear it read during the whole week; and the reading in the order of public worship, is generally at a time, and under circumstances not very favourable to close attention even by adults.

Who has not often had his attention drawn to some well-known passage of Scripture by the uncommon excellence with which it has been read? The words or the sense may be perfectly familiar to us, but the manner of the reader seems to give it the freshness of a new composition; we seem at once to understand and enjoy what never struck us before. Most children are less familiar with the Bible, probably, than their teachers; and an oft-read incident in the life of Christ, of Abraham, or of Moses, or

some exhortation from the Epistles, may be so read as to insure the attentive listening of the greater portion of a school.

Perhaps a question asked occasionally in the progress of the reading may aid in securing attention. The effect of such an exercise must be salutary, and it would not be amiss to impress upon the children, and make them understand and feel the importance of being in their seats in season to attend on this solemn part of the service, preparatory to their approach to the throne of God. Who can tell how deep and lasting may be the effect of establishing in their minds this habitual reverence for the Holy Scriptures? That wonderful volume which should be always opened, read and closed with the solemn thought, that out of it we are all to be judged.

It may be well, sometimes, to make the selection of Scripture like the hymns, to bear upon some point of discipline, or some peculiar circumstance or event in the state of the school, or any of its members; the reading should not ordinarily occupy more than five, nor less than three minutes of school-time, including any remarks that may be made upon it.

§ IV. As to the *prayer*, a volume of directions might be given, and after all the good sense and discretion of the superintendent must be the main directory. Both superintendents and teachers of schools should study this subject with great diligence. Without daily communion with the Father of mercies and God of all grace, their occupation will be exceedingly dull and unprofitable; and if they enjoy this communion, a current of praying breath will pass upward to the throne of a prayer-answering God, and there will be borne back upon

it blessings for the school without number or measure. They should understand it, also, that they may faithfully teach its importance to their children. What finite mind can estimate the blessing which a teacher confers on a child when he acquaints his feet with the path to the fountain of all mercies !

In Sunday-schools every means should be employed to preserve outward good conduct among all the children. Whatever position they assume while a prayer is offered, it should be kept with perfect silence.

We should be attentive to the manner of praying in Sunday-schools. The voice of the person who leads in this service should be loud enough to be heard through the room ; and his enunciation slow enough to allow each word to be distinguished. Nothing keeps the attention of children better than a distinct and clear voice, and an earnest manner. When the person who prays speaks so low or so indistinctly as not to be heard by every child in the room, he must not wonder if those who do not hear should read or play, or should be restless during the service.

Another frequent error of prayers is, that they are made up rather of exhortations and remarks, than petitions. The person who leads in the exercise is desirous of making an impression on the minds of the children, and in this well-meant purpose, forgets that prayer is for God. The more strictly our prayers are confined to their character as addressed to the Supreme Being, the better for our devotion and for the objects we seek.

The person who leads should remember that the children are required to follow him ; that if his language does not express what may be their thoughts, the service is a vain one to them. And he

should remember, too, that it is their thoughts and desires which are chiefly to be offered up; that these are few and simple, and that a few moments' attention to one subject, or a few moments' continuance in one position, is all they can bear.

Those prayers will be most likely to interest the minds of children which are direct in their petitions; which ask for specific things, or give praise for specific blessings. Children cannot unite in expressions which bring no subject before their minds, and which are so vague and general, that when the prayer is closed they cannot tell what would be an answer to the prayer. Our prayers are not enough connected throughout; the sentences we utter have often no reference to each other, and the reason is, we do not fix our minds on the subjects we desire to present. Children above all other persons, need this connexion to lead their minds along, and are more benefited by dwelling on a few topics, than by being hurried through a variety.

He who prays with children needs to study the language he is to use, as much almost as one who prays with the deaf and dumb; and it would be almost as reasonable to expect that the soul of the poor deaf mute could rise to God in prayer in forms which he neither hears, nor sees, nor understands, as that a child can unite in petitions of which he knows neither the meaning nor object. Figurative language, even if it is scriptural, is not so proper for this purpose as that which is simple, unless the figure is so clear that the meaning will at once be caught by a child. Many persons use scriptural phrases, and phrases that have become familiar to adults by long usage, which convey no meaning to the young. To take one instance. It is very common, in prayer and in exhortation, to speak of

children's *giving their hearts to God*. To us this is a very plain and intelligible expression ; and it is scriptural. But it is a figurative expression which no child understands until he has learned and understood that the heart is put for the affections, and that to give the affections to God, means to exercise them in the way which he has required. Now the whole meaning of "giving the heart to God," is to love God ; and this is a phrase which the child at once comprehends, and is therefore better adapted to him than the other.

Let the individual who leads in prayer become a little child ; let him secure the silence and reverence which would be felt were the glorious object of worship visibly present ; and then let him, in faith and with deep humility, express the simple desires of a penitent, believing, grateful sinner ; and, through the mediation of the sinner's friend, he may expect, that while he is yet speaking, God will hear, answer, and forgive.

The prayers in a Sunday-school should always be short. They need not be less than three minutes, and should not exceed five. It is generally agreed that singing, prayer and reading the Scriptures may properly occupy from one-sixth to one-fifth of the whole session.

How far it is expedient to attempt to make children attentive in time of prayer, by requiring them to fold their arms as well as shut their eyes, or to kneel covering their faces with their hands, it is unnecessary to determine. It cannot be doubted that closing the eyes prevents many diversions of the attention, and that a change of posture (as kneeling or prostrating the body) is favourable to such a frame of mind as we should desire to be in ; but it

should be remembered that if children connect with the business and service of God, wearisome and (to them) unmeaning postures, or if the duty of prayer is associated with any painful ceremony, the consequences are very injurious. We have all heard of the child whose Sunday exercises and feelings were so ill-managed, that she had no desire to go to heaven, when she heard it spoken of as an eternal Sabbath; and it is to be feared that children often associate with family and social prayer any thing but the idea of a delightful duty and a precious privilege.

Let the parent, superintendent and teacher, then, take unwearied pains, and study every method of explaining and enforcing the duty of prayer. Let them illustrate its nature and benefits in every form adapted to interest the mind and heart of a child. Let them see to it that they take a scriptural view of the subject themselves, and that they communicate this view intelligibly to the child. For example, we have before us a child of ten years.

“Sarah, do you consider what a being God is?” [Here read or repeat such passages of Scripture as set forth most simply the majesty, glory and perfections of Jehovah; the manner in which angels and holy beings are represented as worshipping Him, &c.] “Do you consider what he has done for you, and is doing for you every day and hour that you live?” [Here recite as fully as may be convenient the constant tokens of God’s goodness to the children of men.] “Have you thought what he has been doing for you this very day and within the last hour? Can you think how you should feel in going to ask a favour of some person whom you considered as very much above you, such

as a prince or governor? Do you know how you feel when you come into the presence of your father and mother after you have done some very wicked thing and greatly offended them? You would hardly think of any thing but your offence and your need of forgiveness; you would scarcely lift up your eyes. In going to the governor or president to ask some great favour, surely you would not think of laughing and talking, but your thoughts would be employed about what you should say and how you should appear. And, especially, if you were about to speak to a person who had been particularly kind to you, and whose kindness you never could reward, would you not try to behave with the utmost propriety and in such a manner as you suppose would please your benefactor? I know what your answer to these questions must be; and now we are about to approach God, who is greater than the greatest and wiser than the wisest, exalted above all blessing and all praise. He is so holy that sinful creatures, like you and me, can only speak to him through Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the sinners' friend. It is through him that loving kindness and tender mercy have been shown to us all the days of our life, and need I ask you to collect all your wandering thoughts, forget your lesson, your plans, your plays, and every thing else but God and your soul. Come, my dear child, do try to feel what a solemn duty, what a blessed privilege it is to worship God, our Creator."

A few hints of this character given in a solemn and affectionate manner, would often excite a new train of thoughts and feelings, and, under God's blessing, might lead to that seeking of his face which was never yet in vain.

We are persuaded that superintendents and teachers are often greatly in fault in this matter. It is easier to say to a child, "Kneel down and shut your eyes and attend prayer," than to prepare and go through the preparatory exercise just sketched; but which course is most likely to produce the desired result need not be asked. When we have seen a group of children peering, with half-closed eyes, about the school, or peeping over their hands or through their fingers at some companion similarly employed, we have thought the benefit of such a ceremony, to them, must be very remote and uncertain.

We have not room to discuss fully the defects in our modes of prayer. There are two or three particularly prevalent faults, however, which we cannot forbear to mention. One is the too frequent use of the names of the Divine Being. Sometimes they are evidently introduced as expletives, or because no other expression occurs to the mind at the moment. The offerer of the prayer may be very sincere and reverent in the use of these sacred names, but the effect upon others is often very unhappy.

Another is the repetition of ideas under different forms of expression. Some men will pray for sinners, and for those who have not been converted, and for the unregenerate; that they may be converted; and be renewed, and be born again, and have their hearts changed, and have new hearts, and be adopted into God's family, and be made the children of the Lord; that they may be no longer uncircumcised in heart, but that they may become new creatures. Again, they pray for all the ministers of the everlasting gospel; then for the heralds of

salvation ; and then for the watchmen on Zion's walls, and for the messengers of the word of life, &c. And, again, it is too commonly the case, as before intimated, that the prayer is altogether unsuitable to the place and the occasion. It should not be forgotten that every child in the school is supposed to unite in the petitions as much as if they passed his own lips. Now, to illustrate, plainly, some of the defects of which we complain, we must resort to a contrast.

The following is by no means an unfair representation of the style or manner of prayers which we have heard used in a Sunday-school of children from four to seventeen years of age, though they are usually much longer than this specimen.

O ! thou transcendently great, glorious and ever blessed Jehovah ; thou art, O God, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and sin is an abomination in thy sight. With the light of this morning, lift upon us the light of thy reconciled countenance. Adored be thy name, O God, for the unspeakable gift of a Saviour, whose merits we plead before thee, and in whose name, O God, we desire to implore thy blessing. O God, make us sensible how vile we are by nature and by practice ; thou wouldst be just, O God, and thy throne guiltless, if thou hadst long since made us as miserable as we have made ourselves sinful. Thou mightest justly have said concerning us, O God, Cut them down, why cumber they the ground But thou hast spared our unprofitable lives up to this time Thy good hand, O God, has brought us to behold the light of another of the blessed days of the Son of man, and we come to appear in thy courts on this blessed Sabbath morning. Blessed be God, we yet live to see the light and enjoy the mercies of the holy Sabbath ; may this be a good day to our immortal souls. May we make a Sabbath-day's journey towards mount Zion above. May thy Spirit, O God, be poured out upon us. Giving doth not impoverish thee, neither doth withholding enrich thee. May thy word, O God, which shall this day be dispensed by thy ministering servants be quick and powerful,

and sharper than a two-edged sword and prove the power of God and the wisdom of God to the salvation of all who hear it. Clothe thy priests with salvation, that thy saints may shout aloud for joy. May Zion travail and bring forth sons and daughters. May Jesus, O God, display the power of his love and grace; may he ride forth in the chariot of the gospel conquering and to conquer. May sinners lay down the weapons of their rebellion, and may converts be multiplied like the drops of the morning. Bless, O God, the exercises of this school. Pour out thy Spirit, heavenly Father, upon it, and raise up from it many sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty who shall be kings and priests unto God; and may thy Zion here, O God, have cause to cry, Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows. Hear, O God, these our supplications, we beseech thee, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three persons in one God, be eternal praise, honour and glory. Amen.

The following is another (and we think much more appropriate) form of prayer for the same school:

Our Father who art in heaven! this is thy day, thou hast made it; thou hast said to every child and every grown person in this room, Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. But we have often done wickedly on the holy Sabbath; we have not always spent the day in reading the Bible, in thinking of God and in trying to love and serve him. Thou art very kind and good for letting us live so long, though we have been so wicked. And we thank thee, we all of us thank thee, that Jesus Christ thy dear Son came from heaven many hundred years ago and lived upon this earth: we thank thee for his holy example of obedience to his parents, of love to his enemies, and kindness and pity towards all men; we thank thee that he at last died upon the cross, a dreadful, cruel death, for sinners like us: that he rose from the grave on the third day, as he said he should, and that he now lives in heaven, and loves and takes care of all those children and other persons who do as he has told them to do in the Bible. So that now, if we repent of our sins and truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, God can forgive us and make us forever happy in heaven. We thank thee that thou

nast kept us from sickness and death, while a great many others are sick or in the grave; we thank thee for taking care of us last night, and for letting us come here to the Sunday-school this morning. Make us sober and attentive to all that is done and said; help us to remember that God is in every place, though we see him not; that he is here, even the Great God who made heaven and earth; and may we all try to be serious, as we should be, if we knew we were going to die this day or this week, as perhaps some of us shall. May our teachers say such things as shall do good to our souls, and may we hear their instructions attentively. Bless our dear fathers and mothers, and our brothers and sisters, and may we all love thee so as to dwell with thee in heaven above. Bless our teachers, who are trying to lead us into the strait and narrow way. Bless our superintendent and minister; bless all Sunday-schools; bless all people, and help us always to pray as our blessed Lord and Saviour taught his disciples to pray, "Our father," &c. (Here repeat slowly the Lord's prayer, requiring the children to pause a moment after the word *Amen* is pronounced, and before they resume their seats.)

We will not ask the reader which of these two prayers would be most likely to attract and retain the attention and sympathy of a Sunday-school.*

§ V. Among the other exercises of a Sunday-school, besides prayer, singing, and reading the Scriptures, and besides the instruction of the classes, are the following:—

1. Furnishing proofs of any proposition, or answers in Bible language to some question stated on the preceding Sabbath.
2. Reading religious intelligence.
3. Examination by the superintendent in the lesson, or on some general subject, or an address.
4. Catechetical exercise.

* Several liturgies or forms of prayer have been published for the use of Sunday-schools.

5. In some schools each scholar stands up and gives an account of his library book or week's reading ; this induces a habit of attentive reading.

6. In other schools a select piece is read by an advanced scholar standing up before all the school, during which perfect silence is maintained ; and afterwards questions are asked on the passage read. Of some of these we shall speak in their proper connexion.

§ VI. *Instruction.*—The time allotted to the regular instruction of the school in classes, will depend, of course, upon the order and length of the other exercises. We are inclined to think that those schools flourish most which give the longest time for the teacher's direct intercourse with his class. If the period of this intercourse is cut down to twenty or thirty minutes by the introductory exercises at the beginning, and a lecture or the distribution of library books at the end, it is hardly reasonable to expect that any very thorough preparation will be made by the teacher, or that the minds of the pupils will become very deeply interested in the subject of the lesson. Where the Union Questions are used, it would be hardly possible to go through with the printed questions in the time to which teachers in some schools are limited ; and even when nothing is required but the recitation from memory of (say ten or twenty) verses of Scripture, the distinct and correct repetition of them by each member of a class of six or eight, with such inquiries as would be necessary to ascertain whether the sentiment was understood, would occupy the whole time. So that the business of teaching (properly speaking) would

be entirely excluded. The opening and closing of an organized school for so trifling a purpose seems hardly justifiable.

We shall hereafter examine particularly the *method* of instruction. It will be in place here only to state a few general rules as to this principal exercise of the school.

1. Never suffer a session to pass without presenting to the mind of each child, in distinct and intelligible form, one or more of the fundamental truths of the Bible.

2. Do, on each Sabbath, whatever can be done on that day to secure the salvation of each pupil; never promising yourself another equally good opportunity. We mean by this, that when the teacher parts from the child at the close of the lesson, nothing should be left undone which he would wish he had done if he or his pupil should be called into the eternal world during the succeeding week. We might mention many striking illustrations of the importance of this rule,* but must content ourselves with the following.

“While a member of college, peculiar circumstances led me to open a Sabbath-school in a distant but neglected neighbourhood, yet within the limits of the town. At first the project was greatly ridiculed, and by many greatly opposed. But ridicule and opposition gradually melted away, and in a short time I had over seventy scholars. The room in which we met was an unfinished chamber of a

* We particularly commend to the reader's attention, “The Sunday-school Teacher's Dream,” published by the American Sunday-school Union, and highly approved in this country and in England, where it has been republished.

poor lame woman—the only place that was offered. The floor was not nailed down, and neither ceiling nor plaster had ever been seen in the chamber. The chimney passed up in the centre, and the bare rafters were over our heads. Yet never did I see brighter or happier faces than among the little groups with which I regularly met. They lived so far from meeting that few could attend, or rather their parents felt too indifferent to take them, so that their Sabbath-school embraced all that was Sabbath to them. It is now many years since, and I suppose they have all grown up, or have been removed into eternity ere this time.

“One sultry Sabbath I had walked out to meet my school, and at the close of their recitations found myself weary and unwell. The children were expecting me to give a history of the holy Sabbath from its first appointment, and tell them *why* God appointed it, and what were our *duties* in regard to it. For so I had promised them I would do; and so in fact I had prepared myself to do. But being weary and feeling unwell, I told them that for these reasons, I should defer it to the next Sabbath. While making this apology, I noticed that a bright little boy, sitting near me, looked greatly disappointed. He had expected to hear about the holy Sabbath. O! had I remembered that Christ taught the poor woman of Samaria, notwithstanding he was weary and faint, should I not have done differently?

“The next Sabbath came, and my school were again coming together. On arriving at the house, instead of finding them all quietly in their seats as usual, I found them grouped around the door, some sobbing, others looked frightened—all silent. On inquiring

into the cause, they told me that little James (I will call him) had just been killed by the mill! This was all they knew about it. At the head of the little flock I went to the house where the child lived. At the door I was met by the father of the boy, who was wringing his hands in agony, his face swollen and red, his eyes sunken and glaring, and his breath loaded with the fumes of ardent spirits.

"I led my scholars into the opposite room. They seemed to breathe only from the top of their lungs. I took away the white napkin, and there was little James a mangled corpse! The children were all hushed as they gazed. The little girls lifted their handkerchiefs and their aprons to their faces. The little boys wiped their eyes with the sleeves of their jackets. For some weeks it had been very dry, and the streams had become low. But during the preceding day and night a heavy rain had fallen. A mill, on a small stream near by, which had stood still for some time for want of water, was put in motion early on the Sabbath morning. I need not say that the miller had no fear of God before his eyes. About an hour before the Sabbath-school usually assembled, little James had gone down to the mill stream to bathe. The child had never seen his parents sanctify the Sabbath. He swam out into the stream: the current was strong—too strong for him: he raised the cry of distress: the miller heard him, and saw him, but had no presence of mind. The current swept along: the child struggled—again cried for help: the waters rushed on: he was sucked into the flue: the great mill-wheel rolled around, and he was instantly crushed and dead! Scarcely had his last cry reached the ears

of the miller, before his mangled corpse was in sight. *It was the same little boy that had looked so disappointed on the preceding Sabbath, because I omitted to talk about the holy Sabbath.*

“While standing beside the lifeless body of this fair child, with all the children around me, my reflections were painful indeed. It seemed as if every child would cry out, O! had you kept your word and told us about breaking the Sabbath, perhaps he would not have gone into the water—he would not have been killed. It seemed as if the lips, though sealed by the hand of death, would open and upbraid me for my neglect. Had I been faithful and not put off my duty, probably his life would have been saved. What sacrifices would I have not made, could that child once more have gone into the Sabbath-school!”

3. If we are interested, the impression which our words and actions make, will probably be permanent.

We once heard a superintendent say, that when he was a scholar in the Sunday-school, the manner and very countenance of his teacher so fully manifested his interest in him, that he could not help being affected by it. His heart seemed so sincerely engaged in seeking his spiritual welfare, that it compelled him to think of himself, and to pray for himself.

4. Be simple. Simplicity, everywhere beautiful, is, in the manner of Sunday-school instruction, the very essence of its excellence. Without it the teacher, the superintendent, the pastor imparts no information, makes no abiding impression. Illustrations should not be multiplied, lest they divert the mind from the main subject, and when used they

should relate to scenes and habits familiar to the pupil.

Mr. Kohlmeister, a Moravian missionary, laboured among the Esquimaux for thirty-four years, and first translated the four gospels into the Esquimaux language. The Esquimaux had no word to express the Saviour, and he could never discover that they had any correct idea of such a friend. But he said to them, "Does it not happen sometimes, when you are out fishing, that a storm arises, and some of you are lost and some saved?" They said, "O yes, very often." "But it also happens that you are in the water, and owe your safety to some brother or friend that stretches out his hand to save you?" "Very frequently." "Then what do you call that friend?" They gave him in answer a word of their language, and he immediately wrote it against the term Saviour, and ever afterward it was intelligible to them.

5. As to topics of instruction, we have already said that they should be strictly religious. And every view of religion is imperfect which does not exhibit on a broad and luminous field of vision the plan of redemption through the blood of Christ. This is the centre to which every circle of truth must conform. There is no doctrine more simple and intelligible than this, and none so little understood by impenitent adults. The difficulty does not lie in the doctrine, but in that pride of heart which will not permit them to see its simplicity and beauty. But in the mind of youth this barrier has not obtained the height and strength it gains in maturer years, and consequently those who have to deal with children possess an advantage, which if once lost may never be regained. It is an incumbent

duty then to press this truth home upon them, by showing its nature, and the necessity of its immediate application to them. The introduction of interesting sciences, as botany, mineralogy, &c. with pictures or specimens, with a view to draw from them religious lessons, is a dangerous reverse of the proper order of instruction. The utmost use that can be made of these and kindred sciences, in this form, is to draw from them illustrations of divine truth; and these, as we have said, should be such and so used as to give to the truth and not to the illustration the prominent place in the mind. Even in the exercises of reading, where that branch is taught only, we should use exclusively portions of Scripture or extracts from works of a decidedly religious character. And it may be observed in this connexion, that the principal points to be attained in the exercise of reading, are attention to the lesson on the part of all the class, deliberate and distinct pronunciation, proper modulation of voice, and due regard to the punctuation. None of these are minor concerns, as some would suppose, for where we can succeed in making a child read *appropriately*, we have reason to believe that he reads *intelligently*. So far as the undertaking fails in the former, it fails also in the latter.

6. Remember always the character and destiny of those under your care. It is said that Pericles, the celebrated Athenian statesman, made it a practice to say to himself whenever he was about to address his countrymen, "Pericles, remember that you are going to speak to Greeks, to freemen." The Sunday-school teacher addresses immortal beings, hastening to the judgment-seat of God, and the heirs of endless joy or wo.

7. Converse *personally* with each of your class respecting his soul. This may be done, in private, when you visit them at their home, or by requesting them to wait, in turn, after school on the Sabbath. It should be done frequently and systematically.

8. The impressions you make, good or evil, will, probably, be transmitted to succeeding generations.

A teacher once remarked to us that he now occupied the same seat which his teacher occupied several years since, when he himself was a pupil. And he added that he never took that chair without a vivid remembrance of the faithfulness and earnestness of him whose place knows him no more; that he could remember distinctly with what feeling he besought them to choose the good part—with what tears he urged them to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel. Do teachers consider that they may have in their classes their successors in office? and indeed that perhaps the character and habits which they possess as teachers, may be the character and habits of a long train of successors?

9. Be alarmed at the first indications of sloth or indifference to your duties. The early months, and even years, of a teacher's labours may pass away pleasantly, by reason of the novelty or excitement which is connected with them. And there is a sensitiveness to reproach and self-condemnation for neglect of duty, which is very keen at the outset, but which is easily blunted, if not destroyed, by a few sinful indulgences.

A lady who found it difficult to awake so early as she desired in the morning, purchased an alarm-

watch. This kind of watch is so contrived as to strike with a very loud whizzing noise at any time the owner pleases. The lady placed the watch at the head of the bed, and, at the appointed time, she found herself effectually roused by the loud rattling sound. She immediately obeyed the summons, and felt the better all day for her early rising. This continued for several weeks. The alarm-watch faithfully performed its office, and was distinctly *heard* so long as it was promptly *obeyed*. But, after a time, the lady grew tired of early rising, and, when awakened by the noisy monitor, merely turned herself and slept again. In a few days the watch ceased to arouse her from slumber. It spoke just as loudly as ever, but she did not hear it, because she had acquired the habit of disobeying it.

CHAPTER X.

BOOKS AND MODES OF INSTRUCTION.

FROM what has been said of the nature and object of Sunday-schools, it may be inferred that whatever text books shall bring the teacher and pupil into the most direct, constant, and intelligent contact with the Bible, are the best.*

* The ten commandments and the Lord's Prayer should be committed to memory, perfectly, within the first three months of a child's attendance at Sunday-school, and repeated *often and accurately* from time to time. It is a reproach to any

§ I. As to question books, catechisms, &c., it would not be possible for the ingenuity of man to compose a book of this kind which would combine all the advantages that different teachers require. A few general principles, however, may be regarded as fundamental in any system of Sunday-school instruction.

1. There ought to be in every school a system of limited Scripture lessons, which should be considered the most important exercise, and ought to be thoroughly attended to by all the classes. None but the limited lessons ought to be absolutely required of any child, and these should be accurately committed, and the teacher should see that they are as accurately understood.

2. It is desirable that the course of instruction in every Sunday-school should be such that any pupil of average age and intelligence, who attends constantly for one year, should obtain a knowledge of the grand outlines of the Christian faith. This can be given by a skilful teacher in the use of almost any question book. If he has in his own mind such an outline of the whole subject, and if his plan of instruction is so laid as to fill it up in due order and time, it makes but little difference what question book is used for the basis of the plan. Few persons, however, are able or disposed to devote to the subject so much time and study as are required to pursue this course successfully. For these a question book is needed, which shall take the pupil over the whole ground in the course of one year, teaching only the prominent subjects, and con-

Sunday-school to have in it a single child ignorant of these two subjects, who has ability and reasonable opportunity to learn them.

necting them by some very bold and simple outlines of chronology. And then, when time and opportunity allow, each division may be taken up separately.

3. It is desirable that the Scriptures should be studied with system and thoroughness. Hence the importance of selected lessons embracing the grand divisions of the Bible in order and by means of which the whole school is limited to one and the same portion every Sabbath.

A brief history of the plan of selected lessons and questions on them is worthy to be preserved in this connexion.

In a number of the London Sunday-school Teachers' Magazine for 1824, a paragraph occurs suggesting the necessity of selecting "certain portions of Scripture catechism and spelling, instead of letting children select and commit what they please." The necessity of selection and limitation had been so apparent in this country, that several schools had already adopted a plan by which a given portion of Scripture, of not less than ten, nor more than twenty verses, was assigned to such classes in the school as could read the Scriptures. This portion was first read to each class, and the pupils directed to read it often during the week, and then it was publicly propounded to the school as the lesson for the next Sabbath, and the teachers prepared themselves to instruct from it. The plan was for the teacher to question the scholars, answer their inquiries, explain the passage, and give such instruction as it naturally suggested. This was to be done both morning and afternoon, leaving only time to appoint the lesson for the next Sabbath. When, by these repeated examinations, and the instructions of the teacher, the pupil was familiarized with

the scope and meaning of the passage, he was required to commit it to memory ; and when the next Sabbath came he recited the portion of Scripture in which he was instructed the Sabbath before, and received instruction in a new lesson. . It was a prominent feature of this plan to organize the officers and teachers of the school into a class, to be conducted by the pastor of the church (if any) to which the school belonged, and to gain from him and from mutual conference, a full knowledge of the subject of instruction. Very little improvement has been made on this simple plan, and the present condition of our schools would, we believe, have been far better at this moment, if it had been faithfully carried out.

At a meeting of the New York Association of Sunday-school Teachers, October 17, 1824, the following resolution was unanimously adopted : " That in the opinion of this meeting all lessons for recitation in Sabbath-schools should be selected, and previously explained by the teacher ;" and on the first of January, 1825, they commenced a series of selected lessons for the four following months. In March, 1825, the American Sunday-school Union published a card containing a selection of lessons for a year ; and for the purpose of assisting teachers to analyze and explain these lessons, the New York Sunday-school Union caused to be prepared a series of questions of three grades. The first consisted of such plain and easy questions as might be answered in the very words of the lesson. The second, such as required some thought and attention. The third, promiscuous questions on the general subject, connected with references, and designed to illustrate and enforce the truth. Two

volumes of questions were prepared, and were received very favourably.

In a short time another question book, similar in its general character, was published in New Jersey ; and was preferred by many to the other. Without deciding on the merits of either, a work was put to press by the American Sunday-school Union, which combined the advantages of both. It was prepared by the united labours of the authors of both, under the careful review of a gentleman appointed by themselves, and then of the committee of publication of that society. The volume thus prepared was the first of the series of *Union Questions*. There are now published of this series. eleven volumes, embracing ; 1. The Life and Miracles of Christ. 2. The Parables, and other instructions of Christ. 3. From the Creation of the world to the Exodus. 4. From the Exodus to the death of Joshua. 5. The Acts. 6. From the death of Joshua to the death of Samuel. 7. From the death of Samuel to the Babylonish captivity. 8. The Epistle to the Galatians. 9. Daniel, Ezra, Esther and Nehemiah. 10. Epistle to the Romans. 11. Epistle to the Hebrews.

The design of these books is to set forth the selected lessons, and to assist teachers (who feel the need of such assistance) to frame questions on the passages composing it. The whole series has been carefully revised within two or three years ; much that was superfluous or irrelevant in the early editions has been omitted ; a great variety of useful references, maps, &c. has been appended, and a general improvement in the matter and arrangement of the volumes secured.

4. The appointed lesson should be thoroughly

studied by the teacher during the week. Our success will depend greatly on proper attention to the means God has put within our reach for acquiring knowledge.

Every teacher should use an interleaved question book. By making notes during the examination of the lesson, he will be more ready in the class, and will be able to make memoranda of suitable remarks, illustrations, references, anecdotes, &c., which would not be so apt to recur to his memory whilst engaged in teaching. A great variety of information may thus be collected in the departments of geography, natural history, astronomy, &c.

With a judicious selection of such helps as we have before described, a diligent teacher, though possessed of limited capacity and intelligence, will soon find the field of knowledge enlarged and enriched at every step. The words, phrases, doctrines and historical incidents of a lesson will each afford subjects for investigation; and the use of marginal references will open fresh channels for thought and feeling. Self-confidence will be found to be a poor substitute for this kind of preparation, for we may venture to say that there are none who have such a fund of biblical learning, or such a peculiar faculty for imparting knowledge as not to require previous study.

A judicious teacher once observed, "I never knew an instance of a teacher's failing to interest and instruct his class when he had studied his lesson, with the necessary helps, until he had become deeply interested himself." Hence it is that we attach so great importance to a thorough preparation of the mind and heart, aside from rules, as a guide to the best mode of instruction.

Another teacher says, "I use an interleaved question book, and prepare myself from a reference Bible, which I find by experience to be the best human help in this blessed employment; one which is recommended by others, and which, by causing the scholar to find and repeat the references, is admirably adapted to interest them, and give them pure Bible instruction. But the best preparation is that which is bestowed by the Holy Spirit, and which is obtained by prayer; nay, without divine illumination we cannot understand, and without divine teaching we cannot explain the word of God. The great Teacher who came from God, and who spake as never man spake, says, 'Without me ye can do nothing.'

"In my question book I note any references, illustrations, and such dispensations of Providence as may occur during the week, and come within my notice. Thus I have always a fresh stock to bring to my class every week. It appears to me, that the instruction which teachers give to their children without study, must be the same one Sunday after another; and may be compared to the extra quantity of manna gathered by the Israelites through the week, producing, probably, about the same effect on the minds of children as the manna produced on the sons of Jacob—*they loathe it.*"

5. A weekly meeting of the teachers for studying the lesson on which most of the classes are engaged, will be found very profitable in increasing the amount of individual knowledge, and in giving a unity of feeling and action to all who engage in it.*

* This subject is more fully discussed in another connexion. See page 322.

6. Some advantage may be gained by calling the attention of the class, before the close of the school, to the appointed lesson of the next Sabbath. It will be sufficient merely to point out the leading subjects. Some notice of this kind will excite interest, and give a proper direction to the attention they may pay to the lesson during the week. For it must be remembered that the business of instruction cannot be fully carried out unless the scholars be induced to make some preparation at home. To attain this end, the instructor must exert all his personal influence, and endeavour to secure that of their parents and guardians.

7. An interesting part of a teacher's duty consists in explaining and illustrating the words and phrases of the lesson. This may be done in the progress of the exercise as they occur, or they may be taken up for that purpose at its close. Attention to this point will often open new and unexpected channels of information.

Every appropriate lesson contains truths which should be carefully separated and exhibited, and their evidence sought in the Scriptures. In carrying this plan into effect, the pupil's powers of observation and reflection will be cultivated, and the stability of correct opinions secured.

If he has placed before him questions calculated to elicit the truth, which he must answer to his teacher, the powers of his mind are called into action, and he becomes interested in the truth itself. Hence, a question book rightly used will not diminish, in any respect, the labours of teachers, but, on the contrary, will greatly increase the labour of parents, teachers and scholars, and will proportionately increase the profit of the Sunday-school.

8. It is not enough that we teach *words* and *things*, we must use these as materials for exciting connected ideas, and preparing the understanding for its future developments. The pupil must be led to *reason* upon, as well as *understand*, what is taught; and in doing so his mind will gain vigour for the performance of its present exercises, and lay up strength and resources for its future exigences.

"I find it necessary," says one, "to use many inducements to overcome this reluctance to thinking, which is so decided. I succeed best by asking questions which they are sure to answer, and then proceeding gradually to questions of greater difficulty, and encouraging them to proceed and persevere. If they will but think for themselves, I always encourage them; being persuaded that they will improve their minds by exercise, and that this early habit of reflection is the basis of all future improvement."

9. The investigation of religious truth is naturally irksome to young minds. They are, besides, averse to the study of any thing embracing abstract principles. To assist in overcoming these difficulties, the truths of religion must be presented in an interesting light, by the frequent and judicious use of striking narratives from biography and history, apposite anecdotes, pictorial representations, and appropriate facts from natural science. The employment of these means will dispel indifference, excite attention, and often prepare the heart for the deeper and richer influences of truth.

10. It would be well to revert periodically to the preceding lessons; or if a system of this kind is not adopted, a portion of time might be used on almost

every Sabbath for this purpose. It will often occur, also, that the subjects of the exercise in hand have such a connexion with former topics as to afford the most happy opportunities for reviewing the previous lessons. A summary or recapitulation of the principal doctrines and precepts of the lesson for the day, might be drawn up to be used immediately after the customary exercise of the class is completed.

11. It is a matter of great importance, and requires some skill to draw out the feelings and impressions of a pupil's mind; to correct them if they are erroneous, and if they are correct, to guide our instructions by them. This will lead to various modes of teaching; and these we must change again, with all long-suffering and patience to meet the changing circumstances of the class; rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving warning, reproof, exhortation, entreaty—to each a portion in due season.

12. Whatever excites the child's mind to effort, whatever puts it upon self-exertion, is obviously desirable. Ask a little child whose wife Eve was, and he will say Adam's; but if you ask whose husband Adam was, the same child will often be entirely unable to answer. Now, if there is any process of teaching by which his mind can be made to think for itself of the relation between a man and his wife, and the terms which denote this relation, and the dependence of these terms one on the other, the impression will be permanent. If this is not possible, come as near to it as possible: take the child's own relation to its parents.

Teacher.—Why are you the child of Mr. Smith?

Child.—Because he is my father.

Teacher.—Why are you the child of Mrs. Smith?

Child.—Because she is my mother.

Teacher.—Whose wife is your mother?

Child.—My father's.

Teacher.—Whose husband is your father?

Child.—My mother's.

When the correlative force of all these terms is fully understood, transfer the application of them to Cain and Abel, and Adam and Eve.

We remember well a famous puzzle current in our childish days: "Who was the father of Zebedee's children?" and it illustrates the importance of accustoming children to examine for themselves the force and application of terms.

"What was the predominant trait in the character of Peter? in other words, for what was he remarkable?" Put this question to the oldest and most intelligent members of a Bible class; let them be required to read or recollect the incidents of the life of this eminent apostle; to compare them with each other, and to consider them in the mass; to judge of the principles or motives of his conduct by the circumstances in which he was placed, and, in short, to determine, by the force of *their own* understanding, guided and enlightened by knowledge which they acquire *for themselves*, what was the prominent leading trait in Peter's character. Let another teacher examine this subject with great fidelity, and present it with the utmost skill and propriety, requiring only the attention of the class to what may be said: need we ask in which case the knowledge would be communicated most effectually, and to the best purpose?

Another obvious advantage of making children answer for themselves is, that the teacher thereby

obtains a knowledge of their course of thought. We take it for granted, often, that the pupil is intelligent on subjects about which he is ignorant, or in error; and from a want of communication between our mind and his, we are both as those that beat the air. But let the child be persuaded to utterance, and he gives you light, and shows you the paths to the secret chambers of his thoughts and imagination; and if a skilful use be made of this advantage, the teacher may always retain it. We should always invite the utmost freedom of observation from a class, provided that nothing should be said inconsistent with the business in hand; and provided, also, that a reasonable opportunity is afforded for the teacher to enforce and illustrate the principles involved. Of course, we would countenance nothing like impertinence or loquacity; but wherever a child is disposed to acquaint the teacher with all he sees, or hears, or knows, it would be very unwise in the teacher to check or discourage him. On the contrary, a willingness to hear, and to hear with patience and kindness, notwithstanding all that the child discloses of ignorance and folly, would tend to secure his confidence, and to give the teacher an invaluable advantage in the whole progress of his labour.

Nothing need to be excluded from the range of observation and inquiry in the instruction of a class in a Sunday-school which is consistent with the object for which a class is assembled, viz.:—The acquisition of religious knowledge, habits, and principles. If, in the progress of the lesson, something should occur which is not connected in any manner with the particular subject under consideration, but which may be improved to arrest the at-

tention, excite the inquiry, or awaken the conscience of the pupil, it should be permitted to have this effect. The skilful teacher will understand what subjects may be thus taken up without losing sight of the great object; and he will so manage any topic that may be introduced, as to bring the mind at last to the contemplation of some grand and essential principle of our holy religion.

We should not care how often or how freely a child would disclose his thoughts; and perhaps it is one of the secret causes of the general listlessness of the scholars in many schools, that the teachers feel as if their path was completely hedged up by the lesson. Many and many a time we have instructed children, during the whole time of school on the Sabbath, when the only topic of investigation and instruction grew out of the first answer given by the first child.

13. Truth is most interesting to children when illustrated by striking examples, because they see the whole force of it in its practical bearing. Certainly the great teacher sent from God has given us a variety of inimitable specimens of the mode of giving the most serious instruction in this way. Let the teacher try the experiment, and see which affects his class most seriously—a solemn lecture on the love of God to sinners, and their obligation to love Him in return, or the story of the “woman which was a sinner,” and who met our Saviour in the house of Simon.

The *manner* of illustrating lessons may be such as entirely to destroy the force and pungency of the truth they contain. The child may be amused, and even instructed, by the illustrations, while he loses sight of the truth itself, or is entirely unaffected by

its exhibition ; while, on the other hand, truths and principles may be enforced with great sincerity and zeal, and yet with such a cold and uninteresting manner, as to weary and disgust the child's mind ; and his ear becomes accustomed to sounds which, like those of the whistling of the wind, or the distant waterfall, only lull him to sleep.

14. It is an excellent plan to state incidents, biographies, &c., from the Bible, in more common language than is used in the Scriptures ; preserving the entire truth of the inspired narrative, adding nothing to it, nor derogating from its dignity by low or trifling language.

15. One of the best modes of impressing Scripture incidents is to ask the scholars to repeat them in their own language. Every one knows how many simple facts narrated in the Bible are misunderstood, or overlooked, until a more emphatic way of reading them suddenly sets them forth in an intelligible manner.

16. Illustration in the manner of the parables will sometimes be very useful, but it needs to be simple, short, clear, and founded on familiar things. Facts also strongly enforce truth, particularly if they have fallen under our own observation. The first question a child usually asks is, *Is that true?* The next, *Did you see or know it?*

Anecdotes of children, especially of those about the age of your own scholars, showing different characters under various circumstances ; permitting the children to bring written answers to questions proposed by the teacher ; getting them to prove or disprove certain points from Scripture ; appealing to their observation ; and especially the constant use of a reference Bible.

Finally, simplify and repeat—repeat and simplify. The best mode is to give your instructions in the plainest language, and to question the child much on every point. There is no mode of urging the mind to effort like that of putting to it a plain question and there is no way so good for ascertaining what part of our instructions have not been understood.

§ II. The prevalent mode of instruction in this country is the CATECHETICAL, and this is, unquestionably, best calculated to maintain attention, convey information, and call into exercise the pupil's powers.

Our word *catechised*, in its original meaning, denotes every kind of oral instruction. It is now much more circumscribed in its meaning, and denotes instruction simply by *question and answer*; and most generally, indeed, it is limited to those little manuals of doctrinal instruction, distinctively called catechisms.

It is not known whether this mode of instruction was resorted to during the Jewish history, in any systematic form; though it would probably be used to some extent in a desultory way. Within two centuries of Christ's death, catechetical instruction was extensively employed by the teachers of the new religion.

Thus the word *instructed* (Luke i. 4. Acts xviii 25) literally means *catechised*; and so also the word *teach*, (1 Cor. xiv. 19;) and we are told by an ancient historian that "Paul preached the gospel from Rome to Illyria, and taught at Rome by *catechising*;" and Clement of Alexandria defines catechising to be, "the knowledge of religion first

delivered to the ignorant by the catechist, and *then say them repeated over and over again.*"

The matter of this knowledge was doubtless elementary, and the manner of communicating it brief and familiar, and relying much for its certainty of inculcation on its frequent repetitions. But it addressed the mind. It engaged the heart. It unfolded the whole plan of salvation. It made Apollos "mighty in the Scriptures." It could not, therefore, be a mere set form. It was not, therefore, matter for the memory alone. It did not exhaust itself in words and phrases, said by rote. But, as it is described by an old writer, "good catechising in any subject is the free, frequent and familiar exercising of young persons in it, till they thoroughly understand, and can express the meaning of each word and phrase, according to their respective capacities, experience, and degree of improvement; thus leading them on gradually from sounds to sense, forming their thoughts, and fixing their attention to the reason and relation of things; aiding and inuring them to reflect a little on such points as are within their reach; and enabling them at length to give a clear account of all parts of the Christian dispensation, and become fully acquainted with their duty both to God and man. This is the office of catechising, which, though it may appear a low, contemptible one, yet is assuredly an arduous task, and which, perhaps, requires the greatest pains and skill of any part of the whole ministerial function."

Catechetical tuition, when properly conducted, is more interesting and profitable to children than any other instruction. Whenever a question is put, the person who answers is compelled to exercise

some one or more of his faculties, such as memory, reflection, or induction. No one, who makes a judicious use of a catechism, is content with merely asking the questions in the book; for this plan, instead of being interesting, is often the reverse. A judicious teacher uses it as the basis of what may be called an *oral* catechism; interspersing to a considerable extent the printed questions with others of his own. These, if expressed in plain language, and having relation to the subject of the previous question, will arrest attention, and lead to something more than an effort of memory. They will draw out thought on the part of the catechised, and give them one of the most interesting of pleasures—that of making discoveries of truth. The teacher who adopts such a plan will himself derive more profit and pleasure from the exercise; while he will have the satisfaction of seeing these advantages accruing to his scholars. To take for an example, the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. The catechist begins by taking the passage to pieces, making the child in fact construe it, so as to give proof that he has not been merely talking in his sleep. What was done—who did it—what was said—who said it? Then comes a hard word, a publican. He asks, what is he? The child cannot tell, or tells him wrong. It is very easy for the questioner to set him right; but why do this when it is much better and very possible to make him set himself right? He will remember, if he is put upon it, that there were twelve apostles; that one of them was a publican; that his name was Matthew. He can tell where Matthew was sitting, and what he was doing when he was called. He thus works his own way to the meaning of the

term publican ; and, besides, learns to bring passages of Scripture, which he has read, together ; thus he gets at a good principle of interpretation ; and, above all, holds fast that which he has in this manner made his own. “ But the two men went up into the temple to pray.” This reminds the catechist to give the child some simple notion of prayer. He may make a speech to this effect, but it will be to little purpose, and there is no need of it. In answer to his question the child can inform him what it was they went into the temple professedly to do : a beggar in the street would furnish him with an illustration of this ; for he would teach the child to quote a text where *praying* is expounded by “ *asking*.” Then, when the child has told him whose house the temple was, he will be at no loss to tell him further who was to be addressed in it. And, looking to what the publican and the Pharisee severally said, he will be led to state that the one *asked* for mercy, and the other *asked* for nothing ; consequently, that the one did actually pray, whilst the other forgot his errand. We need not pursue the example further.

Suffice it to say that under such a course of examination all the powers of the pupil's mind are exercised and interested ; whereas, a discourse on the same parable might have been delivered to the class, and the vacant looks of some, and the impatient gazing of the rest in all directions, would let us know infallibly that their minds are not occupied at all. Perspicuous the speech may have been, but “ like water that runneth apace,” it has passed away from them as it flowed, and whether the matter discussed related to Peter, or James, or John, or the facts were done at Jericho or Jerusalem, or the

scope of the argument was to teach men to pray, or to give alms, to repent, or believe the gospel, they know not.

Hence we see that although catechetical instruction is generally understood to mean the use in some way or other of the particular *catechism* authorized by a particular denomination or church, it has really a more extended meaning and use. It applies, as before stated, to any system of instruction which consists in putting questions and receiving answers. Thus the books called "Union Questions," now in general use, and those questions which a teacher may originate himself for the elucidation of a particular topic, or of a passage of Scripture, all belong to catechetical instruction, and will, in the employment of an attentive instructor, develop the best advantages of religious education.

Teachers should make it a standing rule not to let words or subjects pass by without being understood. This remark relates as well to Bible readings as to the catechism. The common exercise in some Sunday-schools, of alternate reading, should always be made the basis of catechetical instruction. Every important word, every precept, example, doctrine, or promise that occurs, should be diligently used to diversify the exercise and communicate useful knowledge.

The ends contemplated in instruction may be accomplished by separating a question or answer into its several parts, and putting new questions on them, so as to lead to the proper understanding of its several words, phrases, lessons and doctrines. In this way the process of catechising will be made a pleasure instead of a task, and the memory will retain its acquisitions.

In schools composed of children of one church or denomination, it is regarded as highly important to the order and stability of such church or denomination to inculcate those points of doctrine, order and discipline, which it believes best calculated to promote the growth of vital piety in its members. In places, however, where there are scattered members of the various denominations, it is desirable that their strength should be united in teaching from **THE BOOK** which all hold to be truth. If the catechism of one church is insisted on, the school must be broken up. If each teaches his own, the same result will only be delayed. If there is room and material enough for each denomination to teach separately there is still a mixed multitude of children gathered in from all points, whose parents, though ignorant and careless, are prepared to oppose what they call "an attempt to proselyte." And for these a general but decidedly evangelical course of instruction is needed.

It will not be inferred from these remarks that we would favour in the slightest degree the suppression of any essential, saving truth of the Bible in deference to the contrary opinions of parents. Nor is it necessary, for there is not a single truth of the Bible, the knowledge or belief of which is thus essential to salvation, that may not be plainly, and solemnly and earnestly, urged, without any suppression or modification, by any teacher, upon the conscience and heart of any Sunday-school child, let his parents hold what views they may upon subordinate points. If, however, the parents are irreligious, or have no definite views of the subject, the teacher is bound to present his own opinions, and such scriptural authority for them as he

deems sufficient, or to illustrate the same principle in another form. If the difference arises on a point in which the parent's *authority* should be supreme, and in which no vital interests are involved, a teacher should acquiesce in the parent's decision, or course of conduct. For example: in the matter of dress. A teacher may feel as if a child in her class is vainly and extravagantly dressed, and perhaps may fear that her manner and appearance in this respect has an injurious influence upon the class. We should think she would not be justified in opposing pertinaciously the parent's taste, or judgment, or principles. It would be enough if, when on a visit to the family, or on some other suitable occasion, she should introduce this subject, and kindly and respectfully express her views and feelings to the parent: and without impairing at all the force of parental authority, or the obligation of filial honour and respect, the child might be admonished of its danger, and warned as occasion requires against this particular form of temptation. The same remarks would apply with equal force to many other cases of kindred character.

If, however, the difficulty arises in connexion with some essential principle, some habit or opinion that involves the interest of the soul, the course is widely different. Here the teacher may feel as if acting under the authority of God; and there can be no doubt, that it is his duty to declare to the child the whole counsel of God, whatever may be the present consequences.

Ordinarily any difficulty of this kind may be obviated by the *manner* of the teacher. No allusion being made to the parent or the parent's peculiar views, the child may not suppose that the teacher

is attempting to counteract their bad influence ; and when the suspicion cannot but be excited, it is safe to make God the opposing party, and to present the record which he hath given us, as the warrant for every opinion. In this way the child is made to forget both teacher and parent, and to regard only, or supremely, the law and the testimony. And often has it been the blessed privilege of a teacher, under such circumstances, to send a child from the school to the thoughtless circle of parents, brothers and sisters at home, in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace ; and instead of feeling less of the spirit of love, honour and obedience towards its parents, all these filial virtues have been purified and strengthened, and the child has become the light and guide and ornament of the family.

On such subjects as a future state, eternal punishment, natural depravity, the new birth, salvation by grace, the necessity of repentance, &c., the teacher must feel at liberty to urge the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth of the Bible. Whatever may be the opposing views of the parent, while the opportunity is afforded the teacher of leading the child to the knowledge of God our Saviour, the responsibility for doing so is on him ; and it will be no mitigation of his guilt, if he neglects or misimproves the opportunity, that the parents did not think with him on these subjects. Many present followers of the Lord Jesus Christ would, in all probability, have remained in the service of sin to this hour, if ministers and Sunday-school teachers had yielded to the errors and prejudices of irreligious and unthinking parents.

In presenting the truth to a child's mind, in supposed opposition to a parent's views, great care

must be taken that we do not present *ourselves* most prominently. A wise teacher will always strive to make the pupil feel that he is only the parent's friend ; that he comes in aid of the parent's counsel, and instruction, and prayers ; and that, if the parents are wrong, it is not because they can have any desire to mislead the child.

We presume the case will seldom occur in which it can be necessary to come in direct collision with a parent ; and the truly humble teacher will receive grace to meet it when it does occur, with honour to himself and his Master.

§ III. The Union Questions, to which allusion has been made, are intended to combine the advantages of general and particular or catechetical instruction. Those who for any reason wish to confine themselves to the mere questions of the book, are supplied with an analysis of the subject, and are guided in their inquiries, so that by proper diligence they may qualify themselves to communicate the most important information and instruction furnished by the lesson. On the other hand, those teachers who have pupils so well advanced as to admit of a more detailed study of the lessons, or who like to give a wider range to their inquiries, can readily follow out the topics introduced by the questions to any desirable extent.*

Few teachers have been properly trained to the work of instruction. Even if they understand a

* A teacher who is thoroughly acquainted with the particular catechism of his church, will be able to introduce it in the other lessons of the school ; and this should be done whenever the subjects of the lesson and the circumstances of his class will allow.

given lesson or portion of Scripture well enough for their own purposes, it is difficult for them to frame suitable questions for their scholars, or to communicate their own ideas. Knowledge, among all classes, is much more common than the art of communicating it clearly.

Besides, teachers themselves often have the same difficulty with the scholars ; their minds need right direction in the study of every passage of Scripture, that they may know what inquiries to make and which way to turn their thought. The great difficulty with most people, in reading the Bible, is, that they do not inquire. Their ideas are so vague, their vision is so dim, and so obscured by mists, that they can see no objects distinctly, much less state their ideas ; and if difficulties occur to them, they cannot say what they are.

How valuable, then, must be a series of definite pertinent questions, conducting the mind through a gradual development of every subject investigated, especially to those who have never had sufficient discipline of mind to rally their thoughts, bring them to order or concentrate their force upon one subject ?

When a school is supplied with teachers of a high rank of intelligence, and who study the lessons faithfully, question books may be comparatively useless for them. But unless the scholars have faculties and habits of study such as would almost render the assistance of a school superfluous, questions must be prepared in some manner for them, or there will be no studying. And we have almost uniformly found that the teachers who might best be trusted to their own resources, choose to avail themselves of the aid of a question book in

studying the lessons, because it gives a direction to their examination; supplies hints and references which might escape them in their study of a disconnected passage, and is a help to their memory.

Give a child fifteen or twenty verses as his lesson, and one reading, or the committing it by rote, will probably be the amount of the attention that he will give to it out of school. The illustrations, allusions, references, &c., are beyond his unassisted research: and when he comes to be examined, the teacher can hardly complain if he can draw out nothing in the shape of an answer, but yes and no. Assign him a lesson, on the other hand, and give him an easy guide to the way of studying it in the shape of questions and references to other Scriptures that illustrate the subject, and he has something to encourage and require study, and something that he knows can be used as the test of the degree of attention he has given to the lesson.

It has sometimes been said that though the Union Questions may be very suitable for youth of an advanced age, they are too elevated for the younger classes, especially the questions in small type.*

* In most schools there are a few classes who are not of proper age to be members of the infant school, and who yet need elementary instruction. An experienced teacher recommends for such, the Child's Scripture Question Book, First Lessons on the Principles of Religion, and the 1st, 2d, and 3d Reading Books, all published by the American Sunday-school Union, as important helps in instructing the younger classes. "The business of instruction," he says, "is generally more defective in these than in the higher classes, owing, in a great measure, to the want of the proper text-books. Teachers are often unable to fill up the appointed hours of the school, because they have no settled plan of selected lessons, which they may study during the week, and thus come prepared to

It is to be presumed that teachers exercise due discretion in the manner of using this or any other book of questions.

It is, we conceive, very injudicious to fix an age for the use of any text book, or to prescribe any particular plan of using it. The maturity of mind, the degree of information, the aptness to learn, the love of study, the power of investigation: these are the points of inquiry when we would determine the fitness or unfitness of any book or study for a particular child, or the propriety or impropriety of a particular manner of using it.

Show us an intelligent teacher who gives his best effort to his class, and we will show you a teacher who fits any book to his pupil, and any pupil to his book.

From the foregoing views it will appear that whatever system or plan of instruction is adopted, we must vary our manner to suit the age, habits, opportunities and capacities of the pupils. Where Union Questions, or questions prepared on the same general plan are used, we should, as a general rule,

occupy the time and attention of their scholars. The reading books referred to above, will afford the children simple and interesting lessons to commit during the week, and give the teacher opportunities of exercising both their memory and judgment by means of the "Manual of Questions" accompanying each book. These questions are all very simple, and may be generally answered in the *words* of the lesson. It is obvious that, so far as this goes, the children will have their minds exercised, and be constrained, without much labour, to understand the meaning of what they learn. But it will not be enough merely to ask the questions in these books. Every word and circumstance should be eagerly seized as subjects on which to give information and illustration in the great truths of religion."

require a class to make themselves familiar with the subject in its connexions and bearings, and to be able to repeat with precision in Scripture language, the answers to all the questions which are printed in large type.

We should be inclined to think, that as an *exercise of memory*, it would be better for the pupils successively to repeat a verse each, varying the order so that no one should be able to know beforehand which verse he would be required to repeat. But, as an *exercise of mind*, it would be better that one pupil should recite the whole portion, and with so much accuracy, distinctness, and propriety, as to give to his attentive class-mates its whole force and character. The reading, or recitation of Scripture with propriety, is a rare attainment. We have more than once taken a station near a class, that we might hear them read or repeat: and we have been shocked at the gross and shameful errors which have escaped the teacher's notice, or at least his correction; particularly in miscalling words, mistaking and disregarding points, and in a general monotony of tone and manner which indicated the mechanical character of the whole process.

In these and like cases the teacher is certainly guilty of great neglect, and the child is profaning the day and word of God by the worse than useless employment of his time and breath. No teacher who can read properly himself, can offer an apology for having a child in his class unable to read after attending twenty-six successive Sabbaths. If a pupil is unable to read the Bible or a library book, there are books prepared for his use; and we always expect to find in an intelligent teacher's class, precisely such instruments of instruction as the state

of his pupils requires, and if he cannot get them made, he makes them himself.

We should think it best, therefore, (other things being equal,) that one of the class (taking them in rotation, Sabbath after Sabbath) should repeat accurately and intelligibly, the whole or half of the passages of Scripture which form the lesson; and that the rest should attend closely to every word, as much as if the teacher himself was speaking; and it would be well, sometimes, that those who are not reciting should look critically upon the book, and correct any mistake, however trivial, in the recitation.

When there is a wilful deficiency in committing the lesson, the teacher should take the course which will be most likely to correct it; such as refusing to hear or attend to the pupil at all, except by way of admonition and reproof. If, on the other hand, (as is often the case,) his time and thoughts out of school are constantly occupied, leaving him no opportunity to examine, much less to commit the passages; he should be treated with peculiar attention, and should enjoy all the advantages which the skill and fidelity of the teacher can suggest. We should think a plain and familiar exposition, (partly catechetical,) given with the book open, would be best adapted to the limited attainments and opportunities of the pupil in such circumstances. It is to be carefully remembered, that whatever is the cause of delinquency in a Sunday-school child, the effort of the teacher should be, *first*, to make the delinquency as little injurious as possible to the delinquent, and, *secondly*, to use the best means of preventing a like delinquency in future. This order of things is too often reversed.

So much depends on ever-varying circumstances,

that particular principles of teaching are not easily established. For instance, whether questions are to be asked of each pupil or of the whole class, is for the teacher to judge. Sometimes the members of the class are so unequal in self-confidence, in quickness of apprehension, in promptness and facility of utterance, as to make it necessary to put questions and require answers which shall suit the individual cases. We will illustrate this by a single example:

The question occurs, whether there is any evidence, independent of revelation, that the world was destroyed by a flood?

Some child who has been well taught at school and at home, and who, with an active, inquisitive mind, has easy expression and great self-confidence, will answer at once, and answer correctly. The child next on the seat is of a different character, and has had fewer advantages, and needs to have several introductory and explanatory questions asked, and even answered by the teacher, before he will utter a monosyllable. But his answer, or the habit of answering, is not less important because it is so difficult to acquire. The teacher who feels this will call the attention of the class to a series of questions; such as:—

What does the Bible tell us was the effect of the flood? What should you think would have been the effect of such a flood, if nothing was said about it in the Bible? What is the effect of a freshet? Have you ever witnessed its effects, or read of them in newspapers? Would these effects be seen by everybody? Should you think such an ocean of water could pass over the earth without leaving some traces of its progress? Would not the people who lived on the earth the next year, or the next

hundred years, have known what some of its effects were, and have told their children and neighbours?

The teacher would then inform the child how distinctly several heathen historians record the account of the deluge, and how striking are the allusions to it in the customs and religious observances of different heathen nations; how beds of sea-shells, and fishes, and weeds are found on high mountains and plains hundreds of miles from any ocean; and how animal and vegetable productions have been found in a petrified state, many thousands of miles from the place which, from their very nature, they must have inhabited. By such questions and remarks, the child must be encouraged and sustained till his trembling steps become firm, and the sound of his voice becomes natural, and the answer must be made so obvious, that, at last, the fear of mistake shall scarcely be felt at all. If the questions are asked of the whole class, some timid girl would be unheard, and almost forgotten, while two or three would always return the answers; and yet a series of questions like those above suggested, so put as not to make her feel her deficiency, will gradually draw forth answers, and in the end raise her to an even standing in the class. The mode of questioning should be such as is best adapted to secure attention and interest throughout the class; and, at the same time, such as will enable the teacher to decide what is the amount of individual effort and proficiency in each pupil.

The great design of the Sunday-school teacher is to impress upon the mind of the pupil a sense of religious obligation. We have already said that no class should be dismissed without a distinct, impressive view of some great religious principle, motive

or duty. Oftentimes the lesson furnishes no particular opening for such an exhibition; and in such case it can be made concisely at the close, and in the review of the whole subject. At other times, some incidental circumstance, perhaps an answer or a question from a pupil, might clothe the subject of the lesson with such absorbing interest as to make a single verse a sufficient theme for the whole exercise. Ordinarily we should think the whole lesson might be examined; but if time is wanted for general remark, the teacher might confine himself to the questions in large type. In schools which have two exercises on the Sabbath, it is the custom of some to examine the lesson minutely in the morning, and take the afternoon for general remark. We should rather think that any attempt to prescribe a uniform course on this subject to another, or even to one's self, would be fruitless; for, after all, the teacher whose heart is in his work, will break from it and take his pupils with him, whenever a topic of deep interest invites them away.

There is danger of distracting the immature mind by too great a variety of claims upon its attention; and, if we do not greatly misjudge, much of the well-meant labour of Sunday-school teachers is lost by reason of the confused and desultory manner with which they crowd before the mind a variety of subjects distinct in character and differing widely in importance.

If their effort was rather to present to the class a single proposition, obviously growing out of the lesson of the day, and to give it all the forms and aspects in which different minds might contemplate it with most interest and effect; and if, with this single proposition, they would aim only to make AN

IMPRESSION, and see to it that that one impression is made as deep and distinct as a faithful, prayerful, humble effort can make it, we should expect more, and see more fruit of their exertion. If the subject of the exercise was the Prodigal Son, we should, on the plan now suggested, ask all the questions in large type contained in the lesson, and as many of the questions in small type as would furnish a fair analysis of the subject; and then we should select a single consideration; say the prodigal's first error; or the power of sinful habits; or the first emotions of penitence; or his decision and its consequences, or his perseverance and its consequences; or his father's compassion; any of these, or similar subjects, would be among those from which we should select ONE, and ONE ONLY. Having previously taken it into deep and devout meditation, and having ascertained what instruction it affords adapted in character to the circumstances of the class, and having diligently considered in what form it may be communicated with the most point and effect, we should separate it from the mass of interesting matter with which it is mingled, and urge it, distinctly and by itself, with earnestness and fidelity, as worthy of the highest and most exclusive effort of the mind.

If this should be regarded as a high standard of teaching, and one which a majority of teachers would strive in vain to reach, instead of stopping to settle this point, we would invite every teacher to *do what he can*. If he will come as near the highest standard as possible, his labour will be acceptable and rewarded, and probably crowned with abundant success.

CHAPTER XI.

QUESTION BOOKS, CONTINUED.

§ I. THE great mistake respecting question-books, catechisms, &c., seems to have been, that teachers have made them mere labour-saving machines. They have been as unwise in this respect as a man would be who should refuse to walk because he had a cane. As an illustration of this error, we adduce a common objection to Union Questions, viz. that they are not evangelical, distinctive and pungent enough. The objector overlooks the fact that such question books are not designed to be expositors or commentaries. They are rather directories, pointing the teacher and pupil to the leading topics of instruction suggested by the appointed lesson, and leaving the former free to present those topics, and the latter to receive them, according to their respective views of doctrinal truth and duty. It is the office of the question book to *arrange and assort* the materials of instruction, and place them at the hands of teachers. The proper *use* of them is left to their judgment and conscience.

Neither are these question books like catechisms, in which doctrines or articles of belief are set forth, to be committed to memory as established truths or conclusions. Their object is to lead both teacher and child to the Bible as the grand fountain of all knowledge and truth—going before and pointing out the way, removing obstacles and facilitating the progress of the inquirer. Hence, one of the

distinguishing advantages of such a plan of study as is required by the use of the Union Questions is, that it brings under examination not only the portion of Scripture comprised in the respective lessons, but the texts which explain or illustrate them. The system is that of studying the Bible by the help of the Bible. For proof of this it may suffice to state, that in the smallest volume of the series,—the eighth,—besides every verse of the Epistle to the Galatians, the number of passages referred to is as follows:—

In Genesis.....	22	In John.....	38
Exodus.....	4	Acts.....	72
Leviticus.....	3	Romans.....	96
Deuteronomy.....	11	1 Corinthians.....	44
Joshua.....	1	2 Corinthians.....	28
2 Samuel.....	1	Ephesians.....	19
1 Chronicles.....	1	Philippians.....	10
Job.....	2	Colossians.....	16
Psalms.....	20	1 Thessalonians.....	6
Proverbs.....	5	2 Thessalonians.....	4
Ecclesiastes.....	2	1 Timothy.....	3
Isaiah.....	13	2 Timothy.....	5
Jeremiah.....	2	Titus.....	11
Ezekiel.....	3	Hebrews.....	31
Daniel.....	1	James.....	9
Hosea.....	1	1 Peter.....	18
Joel.....	1	2 Peter.....	10
Habakkuk.....	1	1 John.....	15
Matthew.....	28	2 John.....	1
Mark.....	10	Jude.....	1
Luke.....	15	Revelation.....	7

These references amount to five hundred and ninety-one, comprising nine hundred and forty-one verses; and, including the one hundred and forty-nine verses of the Epistle to the Galatians, the whole number of verses brought to the notice and examina-

tion of the student, in this single volume, is one thousand and ninety.*

* "The questions on the Bible, or Union Questions, as they are familiarly called, do not supersede the catechism of any church. They are not meant to do so. They have no tendency to do so. In point of fact, they have not done so, except by the culpable neglect of individual pastors or teachers. And we know of no places where the study of doctrinal and distinctive catechisms is more revived than those where the Union Questions have been used from the beginning. No intelligent teacher ever used them, without finding it easy and almost unavoidable, to introduce the very tenets which his church professes. And it is a signal excellence of the Question system.

"Latitudinarian views of doctrine have been feared by some good men. Such jealousy is needed for the preservation of every separate church organization. By all reflecting men, every church is considered as competent to point out what and how much doctrine is a term of its fellowship, or a qualification for its ministry. The American Sunday-school Union has observed a studied silence upon those points of doctrine and order in which evangelical sects differ. Now, of this no sect can justly complain; inasmuch as no one sect can justly ask the propagation of its peculiar tenets from any other; and because each church is left to do for itself, and alone, exactly what it would have done if no union of Christians of various churches had ever arisen. This is no more than allowing, that saving doctrine may be taught by one who does not betray himself as a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Baptist or a Methodist. It is no more than a division of labour in a great cause; setting apart one set of duties to be performed by each denomination, because such denomination alone, can or will perform them to its own satisfaction; and setting apart another set of duties, to be performed by members of several denominations in concert, because they can, in concert, do immensely more than all can do singly.

"It may be presumed that few evangelical Christians of our day, if they wished to send a minister to preach a sermon in a given spot in the mountains, would hesitate to despatch for this purpose, a Legh Richmond, an Andrew Fuller, a Richard

It will be conceded, we suppose, on all hands, that the heart will not be affected by divine truth, except as it is communicated through the understand-

Watson, an Edward Payson, or a Samuel Davies; especially if each of these good men should voluntarily engage to avoid the topics on which they differed. Now, to be consistent, the same evangelical Christians ought not to hesitate, where they cannot send the teacher, to send his *teachings*, or, what is equivalent, books containing the same."—[Biblical Repertory, Princeton.]

"It seems to be supposed that the use of the publications adopted and circulated by that noble institution (the American Sunday-school Union) is inconsistent with the instruction of the scholars in the peculiar principles of any particular denomination. This is an entire mistake. Not only has no such inconsistency ever been suggested by the enlightened and public-spirited managers of the American Sunday-school Union; but a desire and expectation directly the reverse have been published and reiterated by them in the most explicit manner. Their object, as they declare, is to establish and extend Sabbath-schools, through every part of the land, and among all denominations of Christians. For this purpose they have system, and a set of publications which are equally adapted to all Protestant churches. These they offer to all who are disposed to receive them, with the expectation and wish that every church, which becomes connected with them by adopting their system and receiving their publications, will add to the mode of instruction, and to the books adopted from them, such catechisms, and other formularies, and means of instruction, as may be judged proper for enforcing the doctrines and order of each particular denomination. In this way they furnish all that a general association, which bears no sectarian character, can do; and, at the same time, interfere with the claims and preferences of none. Thus Christian harmony is made perfectly consistent with Christian difference of opinion, and with the Christian fidelity of each pastor and each church, to their respective conscientious convictions." [Address of the Sabbath-school Committee of the synod of New Jersey to the pastors and churches belonging to the synod. August, 1832.]

ing, and this is one part of the work. It is vain to preach Christ crucified to one who does not understand the preacher's language, or who knows not whether Christ signifies a living being or a block of wood, nor whether crucifixion means punishment or reward, suffering or pleasure. Let the pupil understand what that faithful saying means, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and the truth which it reveals may, with God's blessing, be made acceptable and precious to his soul, while without such an understanding it is but an idle tale.

Now there are various ways of reaching the heart through the understanding, and there can be no doubt that in the organization of schools, the forms of proceeding, the manner of instruction, and, in short, in all that concerns their order and proficiency, a due reference to these ways and the right pursuit of them, is indispensable to success. These ways must be cautiously opened before Sunday-school teachers; they must, themselves, be trained in all the elementary principles of moral and religious education; they must be made acquainted with children's books, their character, and the manner of reading them profitably; they must exercise their judgment, tax their ingenuity, sacrifice their ease, spend their money, and appropriate their time, for the sake of making themselves acceptable and useful teachers.

Let it not be supposed, that we would have them learned; all we desire is, that our teachers should be *well-informed Christians*. They need know nothing of the philosophy of language. Only let them speak so that children may understand them. We have no desire that they should be versed in the

sciences, but only that they may have such a stock of knowledge, on *strictly scriptural subjects*, as is indispensable to make them profitable or successful teachers of the young.

§ II. To illustrate very briefly the views we have now expressed, and especially to show that no question book will supply deficiencies in the qualifications or attainments of Sunday-school teachers, nor relieve them from labour and responsibility, we will take a part of the first lesson of the first volume of Union Questions. Luke 15—20.

The teacher asks :

1. Who was now king of Judea?

(Herod.)

Where is Judea?

Can you tell me how many kings named Herod are mentioned in the New Testament?

What was the character of Herod?

2. What priest lived at that time?

(There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias.)

3. Of what course was he?

(Of the course of Abia.)

4. How is Abia's name called in 1 Chron. xxiv. 10?

5. What is meant by the course of Abia?

6. Who was the wife of Zacharias?

(His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.)

If the teacher regards the explanations prefixed to the book, (as very few do,) he will require the child to recite so much of the verse as contains an answer to the question in large type, and to give answers in his own language to the other questions; and this, with singing, prayer, and some general exhortation from an officer or visiter of the school,

engrosses the time and completes the instruction. Now, resting the exercise here, in what is the child better or wiser than when he came to school?

Let it be understood, that our only design is to show that no question book can be formed by the wit of man, which does not leave the burden of labour and responsibility still upon the teacher. And with this view, let us inquire for a moment how far the question book alone communicates actual knowledge, excluding the mere exercise of memory.

1. If the pupil remembers the word "*Judea*," and associates it with the reign of Herod, it is only an exercise of memory; there is nothing intellectual in the mere principle of association.

2. As to the second question, "*Zacharias*," would be a complete answer, and the rest of the verse only affords exercise for the memory.

3. The third question would be more intelligible after the fifth is understood; a well qualified teacher would therefore mingle them.

4. The fourth is not irrelevant, but it obviously needs the close attention of the teacher to give it meaning or interest in the mind of the child.

5. The fifth question asks the meaning of a phrase, while the terms of the phrase are unexplained, and the answer needs explanation as much as the question which calls for it.

6. And as to the answer to the last question, though well enough as an exercise of memory, (as the author designed it,) yet, rather than retain all the peculiarity of the language of Scripture, which in this instance must be perplexing to the child, a good teacher would call for a short and simple answer, which would be, "*Elisabeth*."

Now, an exhortation at the end of this exercise, or before it, may be very useful to the child, and by God's grace the means of converting him; but the lesson itself, without any effort on the part of the teacher, has certainly carried him no nearer to a very low standard of available religious knowledge, than he was before he began.

Let this same question book and this same lesson pass into the hands of an intelligent teacher, of common education, who has improved his mind, and prepared himself carefully and *religiously* for his work, and let us see what he will make of it.

Teacher. Of what country was Herod king?

Child. Of Judea.

Teacher. Very well. Now where was Judea? (No answer.) But what good does it do you to know that Herod was king of Judea, if you do not know where Judea was? You should ask if you do not know; never pass a word till you are sure you understand all about it. Now I will tell you about Judea.

Here you see a map, which describes or represents on paper, a part of the surface of the earth. You know I could mark out on a piece of paper the floor of this room, I should put the superintendent's desk there, the door here, the windows there and there, and our form here, and that would be a map of this floor; so towns and countries, mountains and rivers, are marked out, and put down on what are called maps. This is a map of *Judea*. Turn to the thirty-fourth chapter of Numbers, and you will find the ancient boundaries, or the names of places that were on each side of it. Let us see what the boundaries are now, and what they used to be called.

Judea is part of the Holy Land. Why is it called the *holy* land? It answers to, or is the same as the kingdom of *Judah*. Who was Judah, and what is meant by the kingdom of Judah? This land is sometimes called Palestine. I will tell you something about it, and I shall expect you will remember so much of what I say, as to be able to give me a pretty good account of it next Sabbath, if I should ask you.

Here the teacher may occupy any space of time from five minutes to fifty, at his discretion; taking care, however, to mingle with his instructions, such references to God's character, government and dispensations as the subject suggests, and giving to the whole a decidedly religious impression.

This is the proper place to give an account of Herod, the king of the country which has just been described; such an account embracing, as it would, his character, conduct and death, might be made very entertaining and profitable to quite young children.

'Then of the character and office of Zacharias, and as to the priests' courses; when, why and by whom they were appointed, and where we have any account of them. Here the teacher would find it necessary to impart his own knowledge, as few children have access to the means of information on such subjects. He would tell his class, in suitable language, that in the time of David, the whole number of priests, which had then become very considerable, was divided into twenty-four classes or *courses*, which were required to attend at the sanctuary in succession, each for a week at a time. At the return from the Babylonish captivity, as

many as twenty of the original courses or families were found to be without representatives. A new distribution or division was therefore necessary, in order to revive the old plan of twenty-four classes. Each of the four families that returned was divided for this purpose into six parts, (how did this make twenty-four?) which became so many new courses for the service of the second temple. (Where and what was the second temple, and why called second?) To these new courses, the names of the old ones were assigned by lot, (what does this mean, and what justified casting lots?) and so they were numbered according to the original order of their first appointment. Thus the twenty-four ancient classes were revived in *form* and in *name*, though so many of them had been lost in *reality*. The ancient course of Abijah, which was the eighth in order, had been thus lost with the captivity, but a new one had in this way taken its place and name, and this was that course of Abia, to which Zacharias the father of John the Baptist belonged.

If a teacher undertakes to instruct a child in the fifth verse of the first chapter of Luke, is the above any more than he ought to know about the phrase, "*course of Abia?*" If he has this knowledge in his own mind, and desires to ascertain whether the pupil has it also, he will naturally ask, "*what is meant by the course of Abia?*" And without this familiar acquaintance with the subject himself, is he as capable as he ought to be of teaching others?

But we need not further pursue a contrast which we introduced only to open the way for one question, viz. : *How large a portion of the teachers in our Sunday-schools, will be found in the present use of the mode of teaching, of which the above*

is a very imperfect and unstudied specimen? In answering it, let nothing be taken for granted; let an opinion be formed on *knowledge*, and not on charitable conjecture, or flattering hope.

Our observation on this subject, though confined principally to the oldest sections of the country, has satisfied us that not one in ten pursues such a course, or any thing like it. On the contrary, we fear that *nine teachers in ten* pursue a course no less unintelligible, uninteresting, and we need not add unprofitable, than that first above given in the misuse of the Union Questions.

But we are yet to see the darkest shades of this picture. The *Union Questions* are used probably by less than one-eighth of the whole number of teachers and children.

In very many of the schools where they are used, (as we have reason to believe,) the teachers only have a copy, and the business of the children is to *commit to memory* the selected lesson. Having no means of ascertaining what words, phrases or sentiments will be made the subjects of a question; unaccustomed to that sort of examination, which makes us master of the *sentiments expressed* without reference to the *expressions* themselves; and not knowing how to form, in their own words, a just answer to a given question which they do not see beforehand; and the teacher, too, feeling himself confined to the question as it is, and lacking in genuity or confidence to put it in other and simpler forms, till it meets the knowledge of the child; with this array of hindrances and perplexities, it is wonderful indeed if the exercise should be either agreeable or profitable to teacher or child.

In other schools, forms of instruction are adopted

still more objectionable. Where a form of questions and answers is prescribed, the question is often as unintelligible to the teacher as the answer is to the child. If the former reads the question properly, (and this is not always the case,) and the latter repeats the *principal* words, leaving out others at pleasure, or substituting *to* for *of*, *and* for *if*, and *nor* for *for*, and depending on the teacher for the first word or syllable of the answer in case of a misgiving memory, the work is done, and weeks follow weeks, and years follow years in this useless, heartless round of forms; and when there is no library to attract, or when the enlivening varieties of external objects lose their novelty, the school languishes, dwindles and dies.

There are yet many schools in which the exercises consist in the simple recitation of Scripture, one or more hymns, the distribution of rewards for an exercise of memory, and an exhortation to religious duties, of which the children have never been taught the nature, object or motive.

§ III. We are anxious to show that we do not overrate the importance of this topic. To do this, and to illustrate at the same time one of the varieties of the mode of teaching, we subjoin the sketch of a real scene in which a class was assigned to another in the absence of the regular teacher. The questions and answers were committed to paper, partly at the moment, and all within six hours after they were uttered.

Sunday-school. Stated teacher absent. Class of nine girls; the youngest six, the oldest eleven. Lesson of the day, commit Mark, ch. viii. 1—6 inclusive.

Teacher.—Before I ask you to repeat what you

have learned, I will ask you to read it. Take this Testament, and each read a verse, and then pass it to the next.

First child reads.—In these (those) days the multitudes (multitude) being every (very) great, and having no thing (nothing) to eat, Jesus calleth (called) his disciples unto them, (him,) and saith unto him, (them.)

Second child.—I have compassion on the multitude, because they have (now, left out) been with me these (three) days, and had (have) nothing to eat.

Third child.—And—if—I—send—him (them) away feasting—

Teacher.—No; not feasting: spell it.

Child.—F-a-s-t, faste i-n-g (fasting) to—them—now—

Teacher.—No; spell it. O-w-n (own.)

Child.—Own horses.

Teacher.—No; not horses: spell it.

Child.—H-o-r-s-e horse e-s horses.

Teacher.—Is it h-o-r-s?

Child.—H-o-u-s hous e-s houses;—they—will—faint—by—the—way—for—divers—of—them—came—from—afar.

The remaining six read a verse each, much after the same manner.

Teacher.—Who were these people that were talking together about feeding the multitude?

No answer.

Teacher.—Who is mentioned in the first verse as calling his disciples?

Two or three voices.—Jesus.

Teacher.—Very well. Who was Jesus?

Several answer.—The Son of God.

Teacher.—Yes. Well; where was Jesus Christ born?

Several answer.—In Bethlehem.

Teacher.—Yes. And where was Bethlehem?

No answer.

Teacher.—Can none of you tell me where Bethlehem was, the place where the Saviour of the world was born?

No answer.

Teacher.—Can you not tell me in what quarter of the world Bethlehem was?

No answer.

Teacher.—How many quarters of the world are there?

One child.—Six.

Teacher.—No.

Another child.—Seven.

Teacher.—But you are guessing. I do not want you to guess. If you do not know, say you do not know. How many quarters are there to any thing, an apple, a loaf of bread, or a block of wood?

No answer.

Teacher.—Do you not know in what quarter of the world you live? Don't you know whether you live in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America?

Child, (after a long pause.)—America.

Teacher.—Very well. Now, can none of you tell me in what quarter of the world Bethlehem was?

Child.—I know where Bethlehem is: my father 'tends meeting there.

Teacher.—And do you think that that Bethlehem where your father attends meeting and the

Bethlehem where our Saviour was born are the same?

Child.—I don't know.

Teacher.—Well; can you tell me what Jesus Christ came into the world for?

Several children.—To save sinners.

Teacher.—Very well; and who are sinners?

Several children.—All of us.

Teacher.—Very well. Then I am a sinner, and you are a sinner, and you, Mary, and you, Jane, (and so through the class.) Well now, I want you to tell me (addressing one child by name) what makes *you* a sinner? What have *you* ever done that was sinful? I wish you would all think, for I shall put the same question to each of you, and then I shall tell you what I think makes me a sinner. I only want you to tell me one thing you ever did in your whole life that you now think was sinful.

No answer.

The question being asked of the fourth child, she said, "I suppose I have told lies sometimes."

Teacher.—Very well, that is just such an answer as I wanted. Now, can none of the rest of you answer the question?

No answer.

Teacher.—Well; perhaps you do not understand the question, and I will ask it differently. Should you think it would be a sin not to love God?

Several children.—Yes, sir.

Teacher.—Well; have *you* always loved God, Matilda?

Matilda.—Yes, sir.

Teacher.—What have you ever done to show that you loved him?

Matilda.—I don't know.

Teacher.—Do you love your mother?

Matilda.—Mother's dead.

Teacher.—Ah! I am sorry to hear that, for there is no friend in the world like a good mother; but I hope God will take care of you, and he is better than father or mother, for he never can die, and knows just what will make us happy, and will always love those who love him. But did you love your mother while she was living?

Matilda, (weeping.)—Yes, sir.

Teacher.—Well; I will not ask you what you did to show that you loved her. I suppose you obeyed her, and was kind to her, and never did what would displease her. Was it so?

Matilda.—Yes, sir, sometimes.

Teacher.—And have you done any thing like this to show that you loved God?

Matilda.—No, sir.

Teacher.—Have you ever thanked God at night for taking care of you through the day?

Matilda.—Yes, sir; I pray to him every night.

Teacher.—Do you pray that he will forgive your sins, and take care of you?

Matilda.—Yes, sir.

Teacher.—What do you say? Can you tell me any of the words you use?

Matilda.—Our Father who art in heaven.

Teacher.—Very well; go on, that is not all. Can't you say the whole?

Matilda.—That's all I can say.

Teacher.—But there is nothing about asking God to forgive or take care of you in that.

No reply.

Teacher.—And what do you pray for in the morning?

Matilda.—My father prays in the morning.

Teacher.—I am glad of that. And does he thank God for taking care of you?

Matilda.—Yes, sir.

Teacher.—What words does he say? Do you remember how he thanks God, or what he says to God about you?

No answer.

Teacher.—I am afraid God does not remember your prayers any better than you do. Have you no brothers or sisters that pray?

Matilda.—My sister used to pray, but she is dead.

Teacher.—And where is your sister now?

Matilda.—Up in the sky.

Teacher.—What makes you think so?

Matilda.—Because she was good.

Teacher.—What makes you think she was good?

Matilda.—Because father says she was, and he is good.

This brief sketch of an actual exercise, presents not an exaggerated or singular case, as we could easily show by adducing authentic histories of the cases; but we have room only for the following from the *Family Visiter*, a valuable periodical, published by the Protestant Episcopal Sunday-school Union, to which we have several times referred:—

“Mary —, a child not five years old, but of quick capacity, was taught by an elder sister to repeat many little pieces of poetry: among others, this from our Sunday-school collection,

'Tis religion that must give
Sweetest pleasure while we live;
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.

After death, its joys will be
Lasting as eternity :
Be the living God my friend,
Then my bliss shall never end.

“Mary learned these verses perfectly, and it was interesting to hear her repeating the consoling truths expressed in them in her sweet infantine voice ; her sister hoped it might edify some of the elder members of the family, and certainly thought the child had some general ideas of the meaning of the hymn. Mary learned to sing these words to a pretty tune, and often amused herself by doing so. One day, when the sisters were together alone, the child said, ‘Sister, let us sing.’ ‘Very well,’ said the sister, ‘what shall we sing?’ ‘Why,’ said Mary, ‘let us sing about Sally.’ ‘My dear, we don’t know any song about Sally.’ ‘O, yes, sister, you do, you know a piece about Sally and George.’ ‘Indeed, Mary, I do not,’ answered the sister, a little surprised at the child’s pertinacity. ‘Sally, Sally,’ she repeated, running over in her memory all the pieces she had taught the little girl. ‘Yes, sister, you *do* know a verse about Sally *Comfort* and George.’ Now the truth flashed on the mind of the sister, that in repeating the above hymn, Mary had changed the word solid, which she did not understand, for Sally, which she did. Still she was at a loss to know where George was to be found in it. She told Mary to say it for her, and carefully observing as she went along, discovered the child said the second verse,

After death, its George shall be
Lasting as eternity.

Thus it was plain Mary understood not a syllable of what she was saying, but took the whole for a story about little Sally and George Comfort. Let it not be thought she was uncommonly stupid; she was a child of good abilities, but like most children of her age, was entirely ignorant of the meaning of most of the words contained in these two verses."

The writer adds:—

"It is well known that a lady who had distinguished herself in the literary world, in speaking of the imperfect conceptions which children form of the meaning of that which seems familiar to their elders, confessed, that when she was a child, in reading Matthew xxii. 40, she verily thought these two commandments were two large pegs, on which the law and the prophets, like some kind of long cloaks, were hung."

We have sometimes heard the most highly figurative language employed to convey to a class of poor ignorant boys, who have perhaps never heard of a Saviour, some simple truth of his religion. For example:—

A teacher began his religious instructions by reading to the class from the seventeenth chapter of Luke, an account of the healing of the lepers. His exhortation founded on the passage was of this sort: "Now, my children, you have the leprosy of sin on your souls; you are full of this dreadful disease. Christ is the only physician; he has the balm of Gilead, fly to him to heal you;" and in a strain like this he continued earnestly and sincerely to address his class. A visiter of the school might here, per

haps, ask one of the lads—"How could Jesus Christ cure these lepers? Could any man cure a sick person by just telling him to be well?" The vacant stare and silence would attest that this is a difficulty which they see for the first time. The teacher is surprised at their ignorance, and says, "Why, boys, did I not tell you that Christ is the Word spoken of in the first chapter of John; don't you remember that he is the *Word*?" To this they agree; and when the class now say that the lepers were healed by Christ, because he was the Word, the teacher congratulates himself that they have awakened from their temporary forgetfulness.

Who would place any reliance on such knowledge, or expect that an intelligible impression could be made on a child's mind of the evil of sin, the divinity of Christ, and the testimony of miracles, by such a lesson?

On the other hand, a course of instruction by which the pupil is taught to study diligently; observe closely; distinguish accurately and understand thoroughly, will result in intelligence, discrimination and quick apprehension. The following instance, in illustration of this principle, comes to us upon unquestionable authority. A plain and rational course of instruction, such as we have described, would soon render such instances as common as they are now rare.

The lesson of the day was the incredulity of Thomas. The teacher (a highly respectable physician) was endeavouring to exhibit to his class the exceeding compassion and condescension of our Saviour in consenting to furnish the very evidence which the unreasonable, unbelieving disciple asked. "Our Saviour was not present in body," said the

teacher, "when Thomas described the kind of evidence which would satisfy him, but it seems he knew exactly what had passed. So, when they met again, Jesus said to Thomas, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side;' and he did."—"Did he, doctor?" inquired one of the class. "Yes," said the teacher, "wonderful as it seems." "But," said the inquirer, "did he thrust his hand into his side, doctor?"—"Certainly," said the teacher, "look to your Bible if there is any doubt." The examination soon showed that the teacher might have been taught by his pupil.

§ IV. We have now done with question books and forms of instruction, but we are anxious, before dismissing this chief topic of the present volume, to furnish our fellow-labourers with a distinct outline or summary of those facts and principles in the PRACTICE of teaching which the experience and observation of many years and many minds have supplied.

1. Study all the lesson in the Bible yourself. Read it carefully. Observe its connexion with what goes before and follows. Consult the Bible Dictionary, Bible Geography, Biblical Antiquities, Bible Natural History, and maps on the names, places and subjects which occur. Make these references carefully, and not in a hurry; compare them, and see that you understand them, and make notes of such illustrations as you gain in your interleaved question book.

Go over the lesson again with the question book in your hand; you will find many topics suggested, and inquiries made which did not strike you, and references to explanatory Scriptures which you should consult. It will also suggest the practical

instructions which the several portions of the passage contain.

2. Appoint for your class such a portion of the lesson as you think they can become thoroughly acquainted with. Encourage them to examine every question, and teach them how to study the whole lesson so as to obtain a connected knowledge of the entire passage. That is, let them not suppose that they have learned the lesson when they have discovered the answer to each interrogatory. Let them see that it is the connexion of facts or truths ; the subject as *a whole*, that they are to look at ; that they must get correct ideas of the entire passage, and not of detached expressions only ; that they must not only be prepared to answer leading questions correctly, but to see why such questions are asked, and what they have to do with what goes before and follows ; so that when they think of the lesson, it will not be in their minds like the column of a dictionary, but as a connected and instructive narration.

3. Yourself and your class having thoroughly studied the lesson in this way by the help of the question book, you meet together. You have then two objects. One is, to ascertain that they have all studied the lesson ; and the other, to see that they understand it, and receive its practical instructions. It is not the best way of accomplishing this to propose the questions just as they occur, and in the very words of the book.

After such preparation as is above supposed, you will feel the happy consciousness of being, in some measure, acquainted with what you undertake to teach. You will not feel dependent on your question book to supply you with words to use to

the class ; but following the general train in your memory, you will ask, mostly in your own words, such questions as will show whether the class have only learned by rote, or have really studied the passage. You should try to make them think and reason on the facts, and bring them before their minds as actual events, in which real personages were concerned, whose conduct and character are capable of influencing ours, either as example or warning. It will make the exercise far more interesting to diversify it by putting the questions in your own language, or just as you would do if you had no book, but wished to discover how well your pupils knew what you had both studied. Pursue this plan with the whole lesson. That is, having your mind stored with its facts and doctrines by previous study, let them be brought out in the most natural way. Be guided by circumstances. If you find your class particularly interested in one part of the subject, or full of questions about it, follow out their inquiries on that point. If you perceive that they do not clearly understand the text, or readily admit the truth of any statements founded upon it, stop and examine the matter with them, even if it should occupy most of the time, provided the subject of inquiry be one that is of sufficient practical importance to justify such an occupation. If you see one child disposed to ridicule or doubt an assertion, take pains to convince him of his mistake by reasoning or proof. If you discover that something has touched a conscience, be not too hasty to pass on until you have added something to deepen the impression. Be on the constant watch to discern the effects of your teaching. Be guided by these effects. Try to leave no point in obscurity that can be made

intelligible, though it may cost some time and discussion.

4. Try to make every thing familiar. Let the geography of the places mentioned, the habits of the age, the character and station of the persons be brought as definitely as possible before the mind. Make every scene and event real. "What is the lesson about?" "How long ago did these events occur?" "Where did they occur?" "How old were the personages?" "Their business, families, connexions, character?" &c. Such inquiries give an identity to the people, and a reality to the scenes which, it is well known, are more or less shrouded in a sort of mystery to almost all readers of the Bible. Let the instructions you draw be natural and evident; not overstrained. Do not try to make a passage teach what it does not evidently teach, or more than it teaches. Avoid the affectation of novelty in your mode of illustration. Shun every thing like display or singularity. Be natural and plain. Do not turn the service into amusement, but let it be the discharge of a solemn, rational and responsible duty, in the sight of God.

●5. Study diligently the character of Christ as a teacher. Observe how he accommodated his instructions to the wants, the ages, the understandings of the people; how he availed himself of their habits and customs, their occupations and history, to give form and force to his instructions. He descended to their level, and showed himself their friend. He encouraged their questions, and solved them, when proper, without seeking for the applause of his wisdom, or asserting his superiority. He was manly, decided, bold; yet gentle, patient and unobtrusive. He approached men as they

were, and remembered their prejudices and their ignorances. His teaching was always natural ; his illustration of truth plain and forcible ; his exhortations were not empty phrases, urging his hearers to duties they did not understand ; his instruction and advice always went together. He was intelligible to every sincere hearer, and impressed his doctrines by motives and arguments which commended themselves to every unseared conscience. He exemplified in his own life all that he taught. His sincerity was never made questionable by levity of manner, flagging of interest, or wavering of purpose. He was not discouraged by his little success, provoked by the incredulity with which his assertions were received, or disheartened by the inconstancy of his disciples. He truly was "a teacher sent from God ;" and let all who bear that office keep their eye fixed on the one model of all perfection.

The uniform characteristic of his teaching was simplicity. The language he used was such as the youngest and most illiterate of his hearers could understand. With a mind qualified to abash all the learning of the scribes, and the wisdom of the philosophers, he used the plainest dialect of the country, and loved to make his instructions familiar to his hearers by referring to the most common subjects of their observation, and by employing the simplest allegories and comparisons to fix his sentiments in their memory.

But after all the rules and directions which we or others may prescribe for the teacher's guidance, a multitude of difficulties will occur which will call for the exercise of judgment and prudence, without reference to rules or the experience of others. We

avail ourselves of the following very useful suggestions from an intelligent practical teacher on a few points not distinctly presented in the preceding pages.

“I strive,” he says, “to keep out of view my office as an examiner or lesson hearer, and appear to propose the questions as if for my own information, or for a mutual discussion of the passage. I avoid asking *leading* questions on casuistical and other points, thinking it best, in every instance, to obtain the actual sentiments of the scholars, that, if erroneous, they may be shown to be unreasonable, or contrary to revelation, and that, as far as possible, their minds may be brought to coincide with the principles of the Bible, and to acknowledge the unerring wisdom of God. Cant terms and epithets, and all the ordinary technical language of theology are avoided, that the children may understand what is spoken, by receiving it in a dialect which they are accustomed to hear. The greater part of my duty consists in oral instruction. If I see evidence that the lesson has been carefully studied, I find it the most effective plan to make a direct moral and religious improvement, not by a formal address, but by an easy conversation, in which the duties of religion are presented as matters of actual importance, and as much interwoven with our interests as any of the functions or occupations of life. I find that the common declamations on the subject of sin and piety make no perceptible impression, but that the attention of boys of all grades of intelligence is best secured, and their feelings most interested, by plain, appropriate reasoning. It seems to me of great importance to avoid artificial manners in speaking to them on these topics. The (in most

cases unconscious) affectation of discoursing on religion in peculiar tones, and with a sanctimonious countenance, has always appeared to me a serious disadvantage in all the methods of inculcating Christian truth, whether in the pulpit, the Sunday-school, or in conversation. The claims of God are reasonable, and they should always be exhibited in that light; they are plain, and should not be mystified. Of course, there should be no departure from strict sobriety of manner, and the pious teacher will not be guilty of levity and flippancy in endeavouring to treat the subject familiarly. His manner and language should always manifest that this subject is transcendent in magnitude, and that the Bible is to be opened and examined with reverence. Children are rational beings, and should be treated as such."

To the question so often asked, How shall I interest my class and keep up their attention? we can only reply in very general terms, that it is not best to use artifices for this purpose. Their power will pass away with their novelty, and when you have exhausted your resources of entertainment, and returned to the good old plodding method of study, it will seem dull. The time spent in preparing and displaying novelties to catch the attention, would be much more beneficially employed in the thorough examination of the lesson; and you will find that its own proper illustrations, and references arising out of the text and subject, if well introduced, will furnish all the interest the class needs to keep them awake and attentive. Some teachers very honestly aim at multiplying anecdotes and narratives, as if it were necessary to interlard something for amusement. The consequence is, that the

children are dissatisfied with plain instruction from the text, and are always on the watch for the "pretty story," just as they are apt to pass rapidly over "the reading" to get to the picture in their books. The attention is thus diverted from the lesson, which loses its character as a practical study, and becomes an amusement. Few men, however successful at first, can long retain the faculty of pleasing in this manner. Their illustrations will be exhausted. Their frequency will break the charm, and the lesson become a dull work; or if some new variety of entertainment is introduced, it can only postpone this result for a little time. But bend all your efforts to make the lesson itself the point of attraction. Let your illustrations fix the attention of your pupils more vividly on the Bible truth or Bible narrative than on yourself or your story. Illuminate the lesson as much as you can, but do not hold your beautiful lamp between the Bible and the eye; let it throw its light whilst itself is kept out of regard.

When the sacred text is subjected to regular, thorough examination, and is made the prominent object, its hold upon the mind is much stronger and more profitable. The pursuit is also more serious. The interest will grow as the knowledge increases.

Whilst, therefore, we would not discourage the use of such illustrations as would really elucidate the Scriptures and please your pupils, we would have you to use them sparingly, and to be very select in your adoption of them. We speak, of course, of such as are not drawn directly from the Bible, and which consist chiefly of anecdotes, striking events, singular histories, &c.

CHAPTER XII.

MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS.

§ I. BESIDES the regular instruction of the school in classes, there is often a general examination or address by the superintendent or pastor of the church, or an occasional visiter who is invited to perform this service. We think there is danger of over-estimating such addresses, especially when they are invited from strangers as a mere matter of courtesy. There is no doubt that a lively, spirited, brief examination of the whole school on the lesson of the day, or on some general subject, may be very useful; or that a short, seasonable address, on a topic and in a style appropriate to the occasion, often produces a good impression. But, generally speaking, our reliance should be rather on the direct labours of the teachers; nor should we think it judicious to abridge their time for the sake of a general exhortation. We have often known a very solemn impression on the minds of a whole class entirely effaced by an ill-digested, inappropriate, but well-meant speech.

Casual and inexperienced spectators of Sunday schools commonly fall into one of two mistakes. They do not think how often, in the nature of things, the commonplace topics of exhortation have been made to the school; and occupy the time with remarks in a language and style wholly unsuited to engage the serious attention of children; or they think that children must be entertained with some

striking anecdote, or wonderful narrative, related perhaps in the most puerile style. Where there is not a special talent for fixing the attention of children by some very striking method of address, it may be that a few plain, serious remarks, delivered in a kind and earnest manner, will win the ears of a young audience. But, as before intimated, there is not such an advantage of addressers over regular instruction as to justify the suspension of the studies of the classes whenever a stranger happens to enter.

§ II. *Personal habits in schools.*—If any man or woman needs to be circumspect on account of the effect of example, it is the Sunday-school teacher. And there is no safety for him unless this watchfulness is observed everywhere and at all times. A casual word may lead to results of good or evil, of which the speaker has not the remotest apprehension.*

One of the most important school habits to be cultivated by the teacher, is that of uniform, punctual, self-denying attendance in his place. We are persuaded that it is a very prevalent fault among teachers to feel at liberty to attend school or not, as their convenience or inclination may decide.

The teller of a bank, the captain of a steamboat, or the watchman of a city, would be excused if illness or other providential causes should prevent their attendance at their respective posts. How often do

* "A clergyman lately stated to us, that his first serious impressions were made when he was sixteen or seventeen years old, by overhearing a religious conversation between some Sunday-school teachers as they stood around the stove in the school-room on a winter's morning. He remembered distinctly the remarks made by each teacher on that occasion, and could tell who was the author of each remark."

these men go to their employments with headaches, and bearing up against weariness and incipient sickness, under the strong sense of responsibility, and under the consciousness that their failures may endanger their hold upon their offices ! How constantly do we observe men who have no such consequences as these to apprehend, breaking off from the strongest inducements and persuasions to remain at home, on the plea that their business is too imperative to be neglected. They *must* be at the countinghouse : if they cannot walk, they will ride. Or if their vote is wanted at the polls, or in the legislature, they will rather be carried on their beds than let the cause suffer in which their hearts are so deeply interested. This *spirit* is wanted in our Christian duties ; and though we would not encourage the risk of health or life to meet Sunday-school engagements, we would have teachers feel as strongly bound to them as salary, gain, or ambition can bind the man of the world to the objects of *his* pursuit.

A deficiency in this point on the part of the teacher is seen at once in the state of his class ; late attendance, frequent absences, by-and-by vacancy upon vacancy tell the reproachful tale. And not the one class only, but the whole school, in all its order and discipline, feels the disastrous influence of a single example like this.

Having established the habit of uniform attendance, it would be well to make it a rule to avoid every act which would have a tendency to diminish a sense of the seriousness of the day's occupation, either in your own mind or in the minds of the scholars. Let this be your maxim when you enter the school : whilst you remain in it : and when you leave it. You will, it is presumed, always go fresh

from the place of private prayer. If, when you enter the school-room, you find you are some minutes before the time, or that the superintendent is some minutes behind it, be on your guard lest the manner in which you spend the interval shall dissipate your seriousness, and distract your thoughts. You may find, for instance, a knot of teachers in pleasant discussion about the alterations of the place of worship; or the new tune which the choir has introduced; or some other topic of equal or greater importance. The scholars are also amusing themselves in their own way, and the inducement is very strong to join the circle. But before you give way to the inclination, remember the object for which you came; remember that the scholars will take their impression of the importance of the exercises of the school from the conduct of the teachers; remember that they will not distinguish the subject of your conversation, whether theological and scriptural, or secular and trifling. All they see is, that their teachers like to have a pleasant talk together as long as they can, before they are obliged to take their seats with *them*. Think, also, how often such conversations are mingled with smiles and laughter, and how this appearance will contrast with the devotional employments and scriptural lessons that are to follow. Reflect how much such conversation, even for a few minutes, may disengage the thoughts of the teacher from the practical instructions he has to administer to the class. In a word: as soon as you enter the school-room, go directly to your own proper seat. If none of your pupils have arrived, you will lose nothing by giving the lesson one more look. If there should be one, or two, or more, it is a precious opportunity to drop the kind inquiry, to direct

the thoughts to the object of instruction, to prepare the mind for the occupations of the school, and to give a Sabbath direction to the thoughts. This is the time for familiar, friendly intercourse with the class individually. Now you may learn more of the character of each boy, than you will be able to learn when all are assembled and the lesson is in progress. He will see that you take a real interest in him, that you are willing to talk with him, and teach him even out of the prescribed hours. You cannot want occupation for this extra time. If you have nothing special in the way of personal instruction or inquiry, you may take this interval to communicate some interesting fact which has come to your knowledge; or to converse on the library books they have been reading, and discover what impressions they have made. Indeed, the man must be dull and unobserving who can find nothing useful to talk about for a few minutes with a child or youth.

We would add, let the same devotedness mark your conduct whilst in the school. Keep up your interest in the lesson, and let not your manner indicate weariness or a loss of interest. Do not leave your seat. You sit much longer at your business during the week without complaint. If you get through the lesson before the school is dismissed, fill up the time with additional comments and practical improvement. You need not lose a moment. Stay by your class until the school is closed, and then let them not see in your behaviour or conversation any symptom of joy at your release from a task, or any thing inconsistent with the solemn instructions and admonitions that have been occupying their attention.

There is a class of habits more strictly personal than those we have specified; but so obvious is their evil character and influence, that we need only mention them. The use of tobacco in any form; slovenliness of person or dress; foppishness and affectation; a studied regard to fashion; display of trinkets or finery of any kind; vulgarism of manner or expression; inattention; gaping; lolling; yawning; idleness; jesting; absence of mind; the use of drawling tones and cant phrases; moroseness or assumed gravity; impatience and fretfulness; dissatisfaction with the exercises, or with any of the officers of the school.

Every thing that borders on *the queer* should be avoided, if children are to receive unmixed impressions of good. People who have the reputation of being odd, or eccentric, often make very entertaining, but seldom wise instructors. Judgment is a grand requisite in the guides of children.

There are many other personal habits which a teacher may entail on his class, to their great social if not moral injury, but which never occur to him as engaging their notice. Not a word, not a gesture, not an omission, is indifferent or unimportant, when witnessed by a child. All we do, and all we fail to do, is regarded by these sagacious and imitative observers. With what caution should we regulate our language and conduct, so as not to offend one of these little ones.

Even a heathen poet could say concerning this subject, *The highest reverence is due to the child*. Many a man has felt this too late, when he has seen his offspring corrupted by his own careless indulgences or transgressions. A striking instance

is reported of one of the most licentious of modern English poets, who was asked by a friend, whether he had never regretted the publication of certain poems. "I never did so," he replied, "until I had a son old enough to read them."

§ III. Having treated of the books and methods of instruction proper to be used in our schools and also of the in-door duties of teachers, we will now advert to a very large class of important duties belonging to the teacher out of school.

To understand the relative importance of these duties and their bearing one upon the other, the teacher's views should be comprehensive. Let him consider, that to diffuse the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ over this fallen world, is an undertaking of amazing magnitude; that the strength and grace of Almighty God being the sole dependence of his people, the attempt, which would otherwise be preposterous, is rational and practicable: that the means of doing this great work must be multiplied many thousand fold, before any very sensible advance will be made; that the provision or preparation of these means is very much in the hands of Sunday-school teachers. They have it in their power to make early impressions on the subject, to inform and guide the understandings of their pupils, and to bring them within the range of holy influences; and hence it becomes their duty to endeavour to bring into these schools every child who is destitute of moral and religious training, and who can be persuaded to attend; and also to see to it, that when entered, he or she is properly instructed, watched over, visited,

and retained under good and faithful instruction.

Every child in Sunday-schools is to be regarded by his teacher as having moral and physical capacity sufficient, if sanctified, to extend the blessings of knowledge and salvation among his fellow-creatures, and he is put under the teacher's care, to be trained for this self-same end.

Has not every teacher, then, work enough, and excitement enough, to exhaust every power and effort which he may be disposed to apply to the work before him? Why then does he not give all diligence to this simple, single object, and do the work which his hand finds to do, at once and without delay?

If there ever has been a period in modern times at which a sound mind in a sound body could be made available to the good of man and the glory of God, that period is the present. Wherever we turn our eyes, in every quarter and corner, we see something that can be done, and ought to be done. In our cities, for example, what street, lane, or alley, can be found in which the hand of Christian kindness can find no wo to relieve, no want to supply, no wanderer to reclaim, no inquirer to guide, no ignorance to enlighten, no sinful practice to correct, no Christian duty to inculcate, no neglect of duty to rebuke? Go where you will in this wide world, there is good to be done; and we are commanded to do good unto all men as we have opportunity; and this is done, not by waiting for opportunities to come to us, but by seeking opportunities, as our divine Master did: "*He went about*" to do good. The obligation to lead lives of usefulness involves no neglect of social and

private duties : on the contrary, it embraces them all.

As connected with Sunday-schools, our province of labour is almost boundless. Whether superintendents, teachers, or friends, our efforts may be properly extended until they embrace, not only all the members of the school or class in which we are specially interested, but their parents, brothers and sisters, associates and neighbours. The Sunday-school teacher, who is wise and faithful, may secure to himself an open door into all these relations of life.

1. *To his own class.* They are the immediate objects of his care, and the subject of his chief responsibility. They see and hear more of him than all others do, and his influence upon their opinions and conduct is direct. It is constant, too ; for he is known not only as the teacher in school, but the friendly visiter at home. From his lips they receive counsel and instruction, and from his hands the books which have been selected by him with express reference to their respective exigencies.

2. *To the rest of the school in which he teaches.* His example of punctuality, sobriety and fidelity, speaks to every other teacher ; and the good order and attention of his class make it a model or a reproach to every other in the room, that has not an equally faithful teacher. A serious, steady teacher is a blessing to a school, even if it were possible that he should be doing no good to his immediate pupils

3. *To the families of his scholars.* The friend of the child is the friend of the parent. Even if they never saw him, and only know him through the report of their children, the books they bring

home, and the improvement of their minds, habits and morals, his influence through these channels would be very decided. But when to these are added his frequent visits, his friendly conversation, his special loan of a book or tract for the benefit of the father or mother, elder brother or sister, the family of the pupil of such a teacher will not be losers by the connexion. And whatever influence reaches them, extends,—

4. *To the neighbours of those families.* There is a much greater unity among the humbler class (whose case we have particularly in view,) than among richer people. From their condition and way of life there is more sympathy and community of feeling, and less of reserve and independence, among neighbours and acquaintances, than in other circles. The domestic history of each house is known to every other family in the court or street; an improvement or novelty, if it is no more than a new piece of furniture, will often stir up the whole neighbourhood to imitation. Let a family in such a situation become gradually benefited through their Sunday-school attendants, and whatever improvement in manners, Sabbath-keeping, Bible-reading, &c. they exhibit, will have its silent effect upon the friends and neighbours.

5. *To the church.* The faithful teacher is likely to be faithful in all his Christian duties, to be active in every good work, as he has opportunity; and to be anxious to do good to all men. His experience and observation teach him more of the necessity of active Christian benevolence, than those can feel who never attempt to instruct the ignorant, or visit the poor, and who can be said to know nothing of the degradation that exists around them and the

perishing condition of multitudes of disregarded souls. His example alone is worth much to the church ; but he is, besides, directly instrumental in finding employment for those who stand idle ; in encouraging the feeble-minded ; helping the feeble-handed ; bringing worshippers to the sanctuary, children to the school, and souls to the Saviour.

6. *To the public.* Whatever tends to promote morality and religion, preserve order, advance education, extend the habit of reading, and turn the hearts of parents to their neglected children, is a public benefaction. The citizen who labours for such objects does more for the prosperity of the place of his abode, than by making it the centre of trade to the whole nation. When the Bible, the Lord's-day, the church, the school and the book, receive their due attention in a community, there is a pious, educated, industrious and happy people, who have learned their personal, social and public duties, from the highest source, and are a blessing to the state. Whatever influence contributes to such a result in a family, gives that much to the public ; and if this should be too small to be perceptible, the fault lies with those whose neglect makes it small. For let every Sunday-school teacher be *faithful*, and however insignificant the influence of each separately may be, the multiplication would be powerful. If all my class of six or ten were to be converted, and all their families converted, and all their neighbourhoods made places of prayer, what would they be among so many ? But let the ten or twenty teachers in my school ; the one, five or ten hundred teachers in my district ; the one hundred thousand in the United States, let all these be faithful, and then

will many scholars, schools, families, neighbourhoods, and churches be blessed, and the whole community would bear testimony to the influence of the faithful teacher.

Surely our sympathies must be awakened by the mass of guilt and wretchedness which is continually accumulating all around us, and which nothing can remove or mitigate but the knowledge of the gospel of the grace of God. If our schools are not multiplied *fourfold*, and that very speedily, the generation which we might influence will be beyond our reach. We flatter ourselves that though the ignorance of adults is not to be generally enlightened, though the mature sot, or libertine, or infidel, or scoffer, is not to be reached; we have the children, and we can impress truth upon *their* minds, and with God's blessing on our efforts, we can turn *them* from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the service of God. But on what is this expectation founded? How long is this golden opportunity to last? What space is given us for this great work? Is every thing ready to go on with it?

Surely, surely there is reason for prayer and deep devotion among us; opportunities, claims, motives, many enough and strong enough. The eye can scarcely turn to a spot where something must not be done for the good of man, which none but the disciples of Christ feel under any obligation to do; and it is obvious that our work as Sunday-school teachers may be carried out everywhere, into all ranks, classes and ages. Shall we not then *now*, while health, and strength, and reason are granted to us, enlarge our sphere of observation? Let our affections go forth in warm and generous

action ; let us leave the narrow, stinted, and heartless round of duties, and live and act and pray as becomes the subjects of God's glorious government, and disciples of the compassionate and benevolent Redeemer. There is enough to do ; this is the time to do it ; we are the persons to do it, and wo be to us if we *refuse, neglect* or *delay* to do it.

Such a survey as this of the province of duty which a Sunday-school teacher is called to fill, should lead him to faithful self-examination ; the leading topics of which we will briefly suggest.

I am a teacher of the religion of Jesus Christ. Though not called to the responsibilities of a minister of the gospel in the popular use of that phrase, I profess to be acting under the authority of the great Teacher sent from God. I must be regarded, therefore, as a messenger from Christ to the members of my class, as though God did beseech them by me ; and I am even supposed to stand in Christ's place, and to plead with them to be reconciled to God. I feel that to do this with intelligence and fidelity, requires a large supply of grace and wisdom ; and this I am promised in answer to prayer. God is faithful and true, and my anxiety should be, that I may be faithful and true to him. I am placed under his moral government, and he has given me powers and faculties to be employed in his service. Do I feel it to be an exalted privilege to live under a government so holy and just, and administered for the glory of God and the highest happiness of his intelligent universe ? Do I with childlike simplicity yield my own will and purposes to the will and purposes of God ? Have I no desires or affections but such as I think agreeable to the Divine will, and such as have a tendency to make me more

holy and happy, and to advance the holiness and happiness of those over whom I have an influence? Can I declare before God that all my powers of body and mind are joyfully and unreservedly consecrated to him? Have I stated seasons of prayer and self-examination, particularly with reference to my duties as a teacher? and are they observed with punctuality and with increasing pleasure and advantage? Do I find upon the review of a month or a year, that the world with its cares and pleasures has been left in the distance; and that the scenes and events of eternity have become more clear, definite, and superlatively important? Does my anxiety to be found faithful increase? and do my prayers become more fervent and importunate as the Sabbath and seasons of instruction pass away, leaving the hearts of my pupils unimpressed and apparently farther from God than when they first came under my care? Have I faith in God? Have I full confidence that the truth which I teach is the truth which God has revealed, and that through this truth the soul is to be sanctified? Do I teach it with a deep conviction that it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? And after faithfully instructing my class, do I expect to see the fruits of faith in their life and conversation; and do they see that I am disappointed and grieved if such fruits do not appear? Is it a matter perfectly understood between me and my pupils that I am seeking the salvation of their souls; and that their conversion to God at this time, and under my instruction, is the burden of my prayers and intercessions?

And as to my manner of teaching, is it simple, intelligent, gentle, affectionate, patient and solemn?

Will my children testify of me that I seem to speak what I know, and to feel what I speak? When I disclose to them the evil of sin and its dreadful power over their hearts, do they see evidence of my sincere sympathy with their lost state? And when I urge them to flee from the wrath to come and to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel, do I give them no occasion to say in their hearts—If my teacher really loves me, and believes me to be in so much danger, would he be so easy about me? Would he close his book and dismiss me Sabbath after Sabbath with so light a heart, if he really thought I were leaving the school as the enemy of God, and liable every moment to perish irrecoverably in my sins?

What is the state of feeling among my associates in labour? Does a spirit of prayer and supplication prevail among us? Is there a disposition to daily mutual exhortation? Do the fruits of the Spirit, such as meekness, forgiveness, forbearance, gentleness and peace abound in our hearts and lives, or is there pride, selfishness, jealousy and heart-burnings? Do we realize the extent of our influence over each other, and how much the coldness, waywardness and unbelief of one may dishearten and alienate the ninety-and-nine? Finally, in what am I denying myself for Christ's sake? What cross am I bearing? In what do I follow Christ? Have I any of the spirit of the teachers who first propagated the gospel—of him who counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ? of him whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his Heavenly Father? Am I endeavouring to train those under my care to live, not unto themselves, but unto him that died for them? And when

they come up into the active scenes of life, will they add to the strength and glory of the church of the redeemed, and cause their influence to be felt on the side of truth and holiness, from shore to shore, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth?

The teacher whose life and heart will bear such scrutiny as is here suggested, may assure himself that his labour will not be in vain in the Lord. For if there is any one department of our blessed Master's service in which the faithful labourer is more certainly, promptly, and liberally renumerated than in another, it is the *Sunday-school*. To this point we have a cloud of witnesses.

We knew a teacher, now we trust reaping his reward in the world of glory, who began to teach in a Sunday-school in 1818. At first he was influenced to do so by the persuasions of others—himself a stranger to the constraining love of Christ. In about a year after, through those means of grace to which his connexion with the Sunday-school introduced him, he was brought to repentance. Animated by Christian love, he embraced every opportunity for usefulness; and for nearly twenty years was engaged not only three times on the Lord's-day, but statedly, four evenings in the week, in the work of instruction, or assisting in conducting meetings for the benefit of the families and neighbours of the members of his classes; and this whilst actively engaged, during the whole day, in a laborious business.

By reference to his class-books, in which he entered not only the names, but the circumstances of his classes, it has been found that eighty of the females and twenty-six of the males attending these classes, have made a profession of religion, either during

their attendance upon them, or soon after having left them. Of the young men thus instructed, eight were preparing for the ministry, and two had entered upon that duty. Ninety-three are known to have become Sunday-school teachers.

In a school within our knowledge which was established in 1829, fourteen teachers have laboured, only three of whom were professors of religion at the commencement. Of these, all but one are now professors. Of two hundred children connected with the same school during the same time, one hundred and thirty-three (or all but sixty-seven) profess to have become converted to the faith of the gospel.

Of one hundred and thirty-six persons admitted to a church in Connecticut in one year, one hundred and eleven were connected with the Sunday-school.

A teacher lately informed us, that upon looking over his class books for seventeen years, he ascertained that three-fourths of his pupils had become professors of religion, and several of them gospel ministers at home and abroad.

As farther evidence to the same point, and also as an illustration of the frame of mind in which our labours must be performed to be so blessed, we cite a case stated by an eminent clergyman; the circumstances of which were personally known to him:—

A young lady, whom he did not doubt was a true Christian, had taken charge of a Bible class of fourteen young ladies. She had been engaged many years in this interesting service, but entirely without success; no visible good resulted from her efforts.

In progress of time it pleased God to remove

from her, in a very sudden and distressing manner, a particular and intimate friend. In consequence of this event she visited the relation, at whose house her friend died, and stayed for some weeks to comfort her in her sorrow. During all this time the bereaving providence of God was exciting her Christian graces and drawing her thoughts and affections away from the world, and fixing them more intently and exclusively on heavenly and divine things. At length she felt impelled to return to her Bible class. Her spirituality of mind had been greatly increased; and, with a love for souls to which the Spirit of grace alone gives birth; and with desires of glorifying God, such as she had never felt before, she entered anew upon the duties of a teacher. At the giving out of the hymn, at her first meeting with the class, such was the strong feeling and deep solemnity of her countenance and her manner, that it produced a powerful impression, and one member of the class was led, in that selfsame hour, to ask what she should do to be saved. Her conviction resulted in conversion to God during the next week.

The subject of the lesson for the following Sabbath was the freeness of the gospel offer of salvation, and they were required to search the Bible to find evidences and illustrations of it. When they assembled for the exercise, the feelings of every heart were too powerful for an attendance upon it; the whole class bowed before the signal presence of the Spirit of grace; and the power of the most high God was wondrously displayed. Eleven of the fourteen pupils submitted themselves to God, and became exemplary followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and thus the labour of

a single Sabbath or two, expended under the influence of a deeply spiritual feeling, received a blessing from God, which had been withheld from years of heartless service.

We have thus followed out the labour of the teacher to some of its results as they are seen in the development of character. We will now reverse the order of inquiry, and (adopting the language of another) suppose for a moment, that you could summon around you some of the most prosperous and influential men of business, some of the most devoted and useful preachers of the gospel, some of the ablest advocates and judges, and some of the most distinguished legislators of our country? Suppose you could do this as easily as you can now call your classes together, and could open the Bible before them, and impress its great truths upon their hearts and consciences, and give a permanent shape to their whole character? Would you not esteem it an honour and a privilege? And could you possibly exert so mighty an influence in any other way?

Consider, then, what are the facts in the case? Have you not actually before you, every Sabbath, some of the future ministers of the church, and rulers of the country? Some of the great merchants and bankers, jurists, legislators, and physicians of the next forty years? That little boy, who now listens to you with so much interest, and whose heart and intellect you are helping to fashion, may he not one day preach the everlasting gospel to the Hindoos, or the Chinese? And that other lad whom you found in a cellar, and allured to your school-room, may he not, in your own lifetime, be at the head of business in some town or city? Among those

whose characters you are forming, on the eternal basis of Scriptural truth, one may be a Howard, another a Martyn : one a Whitefield, and another a Robert Hall, or Jonathan Edwards.

What an influence ! What an advantage, to have the first training of the young idea, and to direct the moral power of a great nation ! And yet this is the actual prerogative of Sunday-school teachers, wherever the system is carried into full and complete effect. Nor is their influence, as teachers, at an end : nay, it has produced its grandest results when it is seen, not only in all the common walks of life, but in the high places of society ; holding the awful balance of justice ; wielding the powers of argument and persuasion ; presiding over all the civil rights and institutions of a great people ; and shining in the golden candlestick of the church. It is their higher privilege to assist in training up their classes “ for glory, and honour, and immortality, in making them kings and priests unto God and the Lamb.” What power to do good ! What honour conferred upon every faithful teacher, and, need we add, what amazing responsibility is here !

CHAPTER XIII.

VISITING.

It is the glory of the Sunday-school, as it is of religion itself, that it is adapted to the circumstances and necessities of all, of every class and age; and multitudes who cannot be brought under its direct influence, may be made to feel its power through the medium of others.

The weekly visit of the teacher, the circulation of library books, and the mingling of Sunday-school children with others, in the streets and at common-schools, are working insensibly but surely on the best interests of our race. The more devoted, consistent and active the teacher is, the farther and the deeper will this influence extend; and the sooner will the institution accomplish its great and glorious purposes.

The Sunday-school teacher can reach those that no other instrumentality can reach; and he can exert an influence on all ranks of society, in the humble, quiet discharge of his duties, which no one else can exert. It is impossible to trace the influence of such a man as Harlan Page, humble and comparatively obscure as he was while he lived; there was no rank too elevated to be reached by it, and no piety too fervent to be improved and warmed by it. A bright Christian example shines as far in the

humblest as in the highest position, if it shines in as full strength ; and it is believed that the class of persons most easily influenced by it is incomparably greater among those who need the benefit of Sunday-schools, than among those who may be religiously instructed without them.

§ I. We know of no branch of a teacher's duty out of school so important and at the same time so much neglected as that of VISITING. And for this reason we feel constrained to devote to it considerable attention. We shall treat,

1. Of its design and importance ; and,
2. Of the time and mode of discharging it.

1. The object of all intercourse between the teacher and pupil should be improvement. It has been already said that the teacher, to teach wisely and aptly, needs an intimate knowledge of the circumstances of the pupil when out of school, which are likely to exert a much greater influence over him than the instruction of an hour or two, once a week, in the Sunday-school. A thorough knowledge of these circumstances will enable him to counteract, indirectly, what may be in them of evil, and to take to his aid what may be in them that is salutary and agreeable, and thus adapt his whole course of instruction to the peculiar temptations, habits and associations of each individual of his class.

These circumstances, however, are not to be learned by occasional, momentary intercourse on the Sabbath, when every inducement exists to behave with propriety, and to show the best traits of character. There are children, it is true, who even then are unable to restrain their vicious inclinations, and are indeed more open and positive in their trans-

gression than at home ; but ordinarily very little known of the child by the teacher who only meets him in the class.

The feelings of a pupil are scarcely ever disclosed in presence of his mates ; and indeed it is one of the most difficult tasks we ever attempt, to correct this habit of false modesty, properly called rank pride. The answer to a very plain question is sometimes withheld entirely through fear of a smile or a jog from one who occupies the next seat and whose jog or smile is perhaps designed only to prevent an answer from any one else, because he cannot give one himself.

If, in the ordinary exercise of the school, so little can be known of the actual capacity or attainments of a child, how much less may we expect to know of characters and feelings ? In this view we cannot but consider the Sunday-school teacher who neglects to see his pupils elsewhere, (from whatever cause,) as neglecting to avail himself of the most important means by which he may understand and faithfully discharge his duty.

We observe in this connexion that whatever obligation rests upon the teacher in respect to this matter, is laid also in some degree upon the superintendent. He cannot, ordinarily, be expected to know as much of the whole school as each teacher knows of his own class, but he should have such a general acquaintance with the domestic situation and daily habits of each teacher and pupil as will enable him to administer the discipline and instruction of the school with fidelity and good discretion.

The late Dr. Bedell states as the grand reason which will always serve to account for any depression in any branch of our schools, the failure

or teachers in the duty of visitation. "I am fully persuaded that without this, in a very large extent, no scheme can succeed. As a remedy for the evil, it has been supposed that the employment of a Sunday-school missionary might be beneficial; but valuable as the services of a Sunday-school missionary may be, they cannot, by any kind of possibility, make up the deficiency of the teachers' visits.

"One grand object of a teacher, in his visits to the children of his peculiar charge, is to awaken an interest, and to kindle and keep warm the attachment of those children to himself; and this can never be done by any kind of proxy, no matter how valuable. In a matter where the listening to instruction is so entirely voluntary, and depends so much on the awakened affections of the scholars as does the Sunday-school instruction; nothing can secure regularity of attendance; nothing insure attention to the teaching; nothing secure general good behaviour and respect to the teacher, but the affections of the child, won through the medium of friendly visitation."

And he expresses his decided conviction, that though a Sunday-school teacher may attend to the duties of the school-room with the most singular fidelity, he will inevitably fail, if he does not wind about him the domestic sympathies of the children. "I think that some of the difficulties on the subject of visiting, have originated in the impression on the mind of many a teacher, that if he visits the children of his charge, he must, of necessity, go in the character of a kind of preacher. This is, however, in my estimation, by no means the view of the subject which ought to be taken. The teacher, wher-

ever he goes, ought most unquestionably to endeavour, as far as the circumstances of the case may allow it, to press the concerns of religion upon the child; but the great object of the visits of a teacher to his children, is to gain their affections and confidence, and thus pave the way for an influence over their minds. If it should so happen, that even no direct religious intercourse could be had at the time, one great object would be gained if he gathers around him the respect and affections of the children."

And again:—"No school can succeed as it ought, without this persevering and full discharge of this duty; and though I am disposed to make all necessary allowances for the difficulties of the case, I see no way of making any school prosperous unless the teachers in the spirit of the gospel will find some way of making sacrifices of time and effort, and concentrating those sacrifices to this important and interesting duty."

The *design* of visiting is manifold.

It is to obtain a knowledge of the pupil's home. Here lies the controlling influence. Ministers, teachers and friends may do much, but *home* will always do most towards forming the habits and character. Hence a good home is better than a princely fortune. Moreover, the good influence of the school (whatever its extent) will be soonest seen in the habits of subjection, seriousness, industry and truth shown at home. Good Sunday-school teaching may well be called the affectionate and judicious application of Christian discipline as the basis of domestic economy.

It is (as Dr. Bedell observes) to win the confidence and affection of the pupil. If you know his father

and mother; the size of his house; the number, age, occupation and character of his brothers and sisters; his play-ground; his neighbours' houses; his garden, trees and scenery; there is always something in common between you for conversation, illustration and sympathy.

It is to secure the confidence and coöperation of parents. This is all but indispensable to the teacher's success. Besides the knowledge he obtains of the feelings and views of parents, which are always worthy of deference and respect from those who have any care of their children, he gives them an opportunity to know his views and feelings. They are thenceforth more disposed to favour his wishes and plans. Where this confidence exists between the teacher and the parent, it sensibly strengthens the influence of both upon the child.

Every visit affords the teacher an opportunity to extend the influence of religion beyond the circle of his class, and, as just now intimated, enables him to reach many who are beyond the range of any other agency for this purpose. By an affectionate, seasonable, appropriate prayer with the child and its parents and others of the family; by a word of counsel, courteously and respectfully thrown out; by an expression of Christian sympathy; by the loan of a book; by an invitation to church, or to a prayer meeting; and by many other ways that are constantly occurring to an intelligent, watchful Christian, the kingdom of the Redeemer may be greatly advanced by faithful Sunday-school visitation.

§ II. *Of the time and manner of visiting.*—So far as the children only are concerned, and where

the circumstances of each party will admit it, much more direct good may be expected from the visits of children to their teachers, than from the visits of teachers to them. Children are often absent or engaged when the teacher calls; and before parents, or in the midst of domestic business and scenes, it is difficult to introduce and sustain the desirable strain of conversation. And, we presume, many a teacher who reads these lines has had occasion to regret the entire uselessness of a visit, in consequence of domestic circumstances, which he could not control.

But the visits of the class to the teacher are exposed to no such obstacles or interruptions. In his own house, or room, he can govern the circumstances so as to secure such an interview as he desires. The visit itself implies a respect and regard for the teacher, which must make him feel some peculiar degree of interest in its result. He must feel disposed to gain still more of their kind and respectful feeling, and to promote still further their growth in knowledge and holiness.

But the grand advantage of this mode of intercourse is the saving of time. In ordinary cases the teacher's time is much more valuable, and much less at command than the child's; and the child can, therefore, better accommodate the teacher in this point, than the teacher the child. In visiting a class of eight children, in town or country, it is safe to estimate each visit, including the time of going and returning, at one hour. This would be eight hours in a week of the time of a mechanic, merchant, or professional man, and is no trivial sacrifice. Now, let the teacher fix upon a time for the children to visit him, and he may have an uninter-

rupted interview of one whole hour, at an expense of no more than that hour of his own time, and of eight hours of children's time. This is certainly an important consideration.

How these visits to the teacher shall be made, depends very much upon the mutual convenience of the parties concerned; nor is it necessary to establish any general principle on the subject. Sometimes the state of a class may be such as to make individual visits most expedient for two or three, and a collective visit most expedient for the other members. If an unusual seriousness is found in any child of reserved and timid temper, a private interview with a judicious and affectionate teacher, may lead to an expression of views and feelings which would be asked in vain in presence of the whole class.

Some are always embarrassed, even by the simplest question, if others are listening for a reply, but this embarrassment is greatly diminished by being alone with a friend, and having time to reflect and confidence to speak. The fear of what others will say or think is taken away, when the interview is confined to a single child and its teacher; and sometimes this fear seals the lips while the heart longs to reveal its bitterness.

The teacher's occupations or accommodations may not allow him to receive his class individually. Perhaps he has only one or two hours in the week for this object, and can have the desired place of meeting but once, and then at a given time. In such a case a collective visit is all the circumstances will allow.

Some teachers may be unable, or think themselves unable, to interest a single child by himself,

while they would succeed with the advantage of competition, or with the life and spirit which numbers give to such an exercise ; and others, on the contrary, may find the solitary interview much more pleasant and profitable than those are at which the whole class is present.

It will appear from this allusion to actual cases, that no rule can be prescribed which may not be more frequently honoured in the breach than in the observance. Every teacher must judge wisely under the particular circumstances. The visits of teachers and children should be reciprocal, and as often as convenient : should be paid and received in private, as far as the respective circumstances of the parties will admit ; and should always be improved, to a greater or less degree, for personal, solemn and affectionate religious conversation.

As to the manner or subject of conversation most suitable to further the design of Sunday-school visitation, a volume might be written ; though a few words must suffice.

To every parent the welfare of his children is a subject of interest. There is none so vile and stupid as to lose all parental feeling without losing also the right to be consulted and respected on questions relating to the child's well-being. And it is well known, that nothing invites and justifies parental confidence so much as the exhibition of a sincere and judicious regard for the comfort of our children. We live in our children. Love to them is love to us ; and the neglect or abuse of them, we feel as sensibly as if it were suffered in our own person, and sometimes even much more sensibly.

The teacher who has learned the art of becoming all things to all men, without forsaking a principle,

or dismissing a trait of the Christian, will know how and when to introduce the subject which calls him to the pupil's residence.

Care must be taken not to intrude on family occupations, and in general not to make these visits exclusively religious. Religious conversation is expected from a teacher, and will be usually well received. Judiciously introduced and treated, it will do inconceivable good. Parents will appreciate a benevolence which embraces every interest of theirs, from the highest to the most minute.

Parents should be acquainted with the plans of the school, its operations, and their visible effect; our own plans, so far as they may seem interested in them, in which they may often suggest improvements. We should endeavour to interest them in the lessons, to induce them themselves to afford assistance to the children, and seek to obtain their prayers. With candid, intelligent, and especially with pious parents, all this may be done.

The teacher will not rudely direct or control the conversation which circumstances may occasion. Nor will he feel his visit to be lost, if all that is said should not be in direct reference to the school. If the conversation must be either always on school affairs, or always general, we should have no hesitation in deciding upon the former. In no instance, however, can it be necessary to confine it to any particular class of subjects.

Regarding the children as objects of his peculiar care, he will not be at a loss how to introduce their habits, their improvement, their companions, their employments and associations at home, their health and amusements, their hopes and prospects as topics of inquiry; and every visit will furnish some matter for conversation for that which succeeds it.

In this, as in many other departments of a Sunday-school teacher's duty, so much depends on the trivial circumstances which go to make up the peculiarity of each case, that a course of conduct must be shaped at the time, and by the ingenuity and prudence of the teacher himself. Humble, sincere supplication to God for wisdom and grace to help in every time of need, is an excellent preparation for this as well as for every other duty; and the meekness and love with which a devout suppliant leaves a throne of grace will be wonderfully efficient in removing obstacles, and making the path of duty plain and pleasant to the feet.

If our visits, when thus conducted, appear to be neither understood nor appreciated, it is our duty patiently to persevere, and the instances are rare in which we may not finally succeed.

Nothing valuable, or permanently useful can ordinarily be expected from visiting, unless there is some system about it. If the teacher is governed by a regard to his own ease or pleasure, or if he leaves his visits to be regulated as to time and frequency, by circumstances, there is a strong probability that he will soon cease to visit at all. The usefulness of a visit does not depend at all on the *appearance* of parents. Whether they *appear* happy to see us or not, if it is a matter of duty to make the visit, let it be done, and that without reference to appearances. The most useless visits we have known made by Sunday-school teachers, have been made in cases where parents were so happy to receive the visits, that the whole time appropriated to it has been occupied in expressions of happiness.

There is obviously danger that teachers will be disposed to omit those duties which involve the

heaviest cross, whether they relate to their example, their instruction, or their visits; and at these points, therefore, there is need of peculiar watchfulness, and perhaps it would be better to lean a little to the most unpleasant duty. We are inclined to think that the number of parents who receive a seasonable, affectionate, faithful visit from a Sunday-school teacher, with bad humour, is so small as to make any general rule on the subject unnecessary.

Dr. Chalmers, in one of his public addresses, bears ample testimony from his own experience to this fact. He states that "out of ten thousand visits of this description which he had paid, he did not meet with half-a-dozen instances of rude or even cold reception, save when the parties were under temporary misconceptions as to the character in which he appeared among them. Sometimes he had his book and pencil in his hand to note down any particulars respecting the family, and then they were sometimes cool towards him, as he afterwards understood, because they thought him a tax-gatherer; but whenever they knew who he was all coolness vanished, and he had no reason to complain of his treatment."

There may be an error, without doubt, in too frequent visiting, but it is so unlikely to be committed in the present state of Sunday-school feeling, that we should hardly think a caution necessary. A Sunday-school teacher who has leisure to make frequent visits will have his time occupied by a variety of kindred employments, and at such a period as the present, the claims on every individual who has a heart for benevolent enterprise are so numerous and urgent, that the difficulty is to decide what proportion of our regard can be afforded to each,

rather than to avoid an offensive degree of attention to a particular one.

It is the custom in some schools to have a standing committee charged with the special duty of visiting, and this is unquestionably better than a total neglect of the matter; but who would think of such a substitute for parochial visitation by a minister? Whatever is objectionable in the one, applies to the other. It has been said, by a very judicious writer, that a person who cannot visit the parents of the children is hardly qualified to be a teacher. It is impossible to be a very useful teacher unless the scholars are seen at their dwellings, and he is acquainted with the parents.

We were once told of a teacher, who was an apprentice and had to labour daily and all day long, who managed to visit nine scholars a week regularly.

If circumstances make it really impracticable, however, the superintendent or some fellow-teacher might be induced to perform the service; or, as before suggested, the class might visit the teacher.

It is a valuable regulation of some schools, that a standing committee should be appointed, annually, to take a list of absentees at the opening of each session of the school, and ascertain, *at once*, the cause of detention, and at the same time collect wandering children and bring them into the school. In one place a committee of teachers visits the families quarterly; in another, a visiter is one of the regular officers, whose duty is, immediately after the opening of the school, both in the morning and afternoon, to call on the absentees at their houses. It is well also, occasionally, say once in a year or two, to district a town and visit every house Ac-

tive teachers should do this, as well as all other visiting.

In the shifting population of large cities, a periodical visitation of this kind is highly necessary, and can be made in much less time and with much less labour there than in country towns.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE DIFFERENT JUDGMENTS PASSED UPON THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER.

WE have thus endeavoured to present to the reader an outline of the personal and relative duties of a Sunday-school teacher as such, and we are now anxious to present the main subject in a connected form. To do this the more impressively, we shall suppose the individual teacher to pass in judgment before those whom his duties and responsibilities chiefly respect.

§ I. We have seen that, on the system of instruction adopted in this country, the Sunday-school teacher holds a very respectable and responsible post. He is intrusted with the business of enlightening the minds of children concerning their duty to God and man, and the relations they sustain to this world and the next.

The attempt to teach children the sciences which have regard to this world only should not be made without diligent preparation for the office. The individual who proposes to occupy even this post, should examine not only as to the extent of his

knowledge, but also as to his fitness to communicate rightly and profitably to others what he knows himself; and he should be satisfied, moreover, that he has the temper of mind which is essential to any one who would teach others. He must be patient, decided, firm, prompt, humble, kind, efficient, thorough, &c. How few teachers can abide such an examination, and how few make the least effort to form habits and establish principles like these! How proverbial has it become, that a schoolmaster is impatient, dogmatical, positive, and peculiarly irritable!

But the teacher of divine science has need of all these qualifications and many more; but to his own judgment, perhaps, a different standard may be proposed. We suppose him to be just entering on his duties in the school. His mind dwells, for a moment, on the path before him, and the following may be regarded as his soliloquy:

"It is not much to be a Sunday-school teacher. I am sure if Mr. —, and Mr. —, and Miss — and Miss — can teach, I can. It is a good thing to teach children to read the Bible, and say hymns, and as they are only children, there can be nothing very difficult about it. I have been asked to teach by two or three people who know me, and they would not ask me if they thought I was not fit. I am certainly old enough to teach such children; and if I find I do not like it, I can leave just when I have a mind to leave. If I am a teacher, I am supposed to know something that those do not know whom I teach; and this I can say of myself,—I certainly know more about the Bible than children; and, at any rate, I can hear them recite what they learn, and this is the main thing. I think it must

be very pleasant to be a Sunday-school teacher. They seem to form a company by themselves, and they have their meetings, and concerts, and associations: and besides all that, it is making one's self useful. Sunday-schools are nurseries: everybody that cares about religion speaks well of Sunday-schools; and I am old enough to be a teacher, and why should I not accept the invitation? I will." And when Sunday morning comes he is surrounded by the class which lately belonged to Mr. —, deceased.

We do not say that this is a sketch of what passes in a person's mind, when he is determining whether he shall be a Sunday-school teacher or not. Perhaps few teachers think so much; but we believe that often a teacher's estimate of the duties and responsibilities of the place is not essentially higher, or more definite than the above, and it will, therefore, serve as a specimen of THE TEACHER'S FIRST JUDGMENT OF HIMSELF.

§ II. *The teacher judged by his class.*—The judgment of children is very discriminating on some subjects. They are acute discerners of inconsistency, and whenever it is betrayed, their judgment is very severe. When the teacher of a class in a Sunday-school first takes his place, he claims superiority. He comes as a teacher, and his class come as learners. As a *religious* teacher, the class will expect to see in his manners and appearance the influence of the religion which he is about to teach; and probably some of them have their standard of Christian character already formed, by which to try him. Children who have attended a Sunday-school for any considerable length of time have formed an opinion of the character which

teachers should sustain. They have heard, repeatedly, what their professed object is in calling their classes around them, and they read in the tones of voice, and in the habitual deportment of their own teacher, how far this object leads and governs his purposes.

It is supposed by the class that the teacher has made himself as familiar as was practicable with the portion of divine truth which is to occupy their attention ; that he has availed himself of all accessible assistance in understanding the scope and design of the passage to be considered ; that he has meditated upon it with deep and solemn interest ; that he has sought with a single and sincere heart the enlightening influence of that Spirit by which all Scripture is given ; that he has been with Jesus, whenever opportunity offered, that he might learn something of the meekness, affection and pity which that great Teacher so wonderfully exhibited ; that he comes from the place of meditation and prayer, humble in view of his own ignorance, weakness and sin, but hoping in the mercy of God through Christ ; and that his heart's desire and prayer to God for his class, and for the teachers and classes around him, is that they may be saved.

Whatever appears in the teacher, at the time he takes his place before the class, inconsistent with such a state of mind and feeling as has been described, makes an unfavourable impression, and so far prevents success.

God has so constituted our nature, that it is difficult to disguise the emotions of the heart. Strong emotions may be concealed, and affection and earnestness may be feigned ; but, after all, the observation of the external conduct, for a month or a year,

will ordinarily result in a fair estimate of the inner man's character. And this is especially true of a Sunday-school teacher. He is easily thrown off his guard in the presence of children, for whose judgment he may have little concern; and if he is careless or indifferent *in his heart*, no external care or interest will so conceal it as that it will escape the direct and simple discernment of childhood.

Let us suppose a case. Mr. S—— is a teacher, and has a very engaging class, with which he has been connected for more than a year. He is usually at his post, and in good season; he is kind to his boys, and seems to take an interest in them. He is a young man of some intelligence, and stands well with his fellow-christians. He leads often in the services of social religious meetings, and has a good report of all that know him. He is punctual at the Sunday-school monthly concert and at teachers' meetings, and we believe owns and uses the Bible Dictionary, Geography, and Antiquities.

When he takes his place, as a teacher, there is nothing in his appearance or manner to indicate his conviction of the importance and responsibility of the duty before him. He seems to have no thought of the interests which are involved in the relation between him and his class. This is hardly to be accounted for. If we meet a man whose heart is burdened with anxiety, or broken with sorrow, his countenance and tone tell us of it. Let there be a crowd upon the wharf, or shore, awaiting the recovery of a drowned child, and will it be difficult to find the mother? Why should the teacher, who realizes in any considerable degree the interest involved in a faithful discharge of his duty, fail to proclaim his conviction in every feature of his

countenance, and almost every motion of his body ?

In the examination and application of scriptural truth, Mr. S—— is equally unfortunate. He sometimes urges his class with great warmth and vehemence to repent of their sins, and forsake them and turn to God ; he tells them that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners, and that they must believe in Him and submit to Him, if they would find mercy ; and sometimes he warns them of the consequences of disobedience and final impenitence ; but, if he really believes what he says, he is either incredibly without emotion, or he has an incredible power of concealing his emotions. The most appalling representations of God's anger against the wicked, and the most tender expostulations of divine love and mercy with which the gospel abounds, pass his lips with just the same tone. He describes the glory and blessedness of heaven, and the anguish and despair of lost men, as if it were some curious problem in mathematics or philosophy. If we think of the impenitence and unbelief of those before him, and the fearful condemnation which is passed upon them already, and from which there is only one way of escape, we might expect to hear him adopt the passionate exclamation of the prophet : " O ! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night " over your sin and folly in refusing the love and friendship of God. But, instead of this, Mr. S—— talks to them about their souls as their mothers talk to them about their clothes ; and the mother and teacher are heard with like interest, and the latter with much the least effect. Mr. S——'s boys have judged him. They have decided that

the matters of which he discourses are of subordinate interest; and if they see in him—a man, a professor of religion, and a teacher, too,—the degree of interest which he should feel, they think he certainly may see in them feeling enough for boys.

They judge that a great deal of what is said to them about religious subjects is said as a matter of course. It belongs to the system of Sunday-school instruction very much as the spelling and defining of words belongs to the business of a common school, and is to be regarded as of the same interest and importance; and this judgment is formed entirely by the *manner* of the teacher. The class has no formal consultation on the subject, but it is just as much a judgment and a deliberate decision as if they had. Each member forms his opinion on the evidence before him, and it is a full and unanimous opinion that Mr. S—— *pretends* to attach a great deal more importance to religious subjects than he really believes or feels them to possess; and they receive his instructions under the influence of this opinion.

The other side of the picture requires but a glance. Our friend H—— has a class of nine boys, seven of whom are believed to have been converted to Christ, since they have been under his care. The other two have often said one to the other, in their way to the school, “Well, whether we believe what Mr. H—— says or not, *he* believes it. I am sure he really means all he says, and I never can help feeling that he loves me, and tries to do me good.” Mr. H—— and his class never meet without deep feeling and visible emotion, and their judgment of him may be inferred

from what they often say : that it is their own fault if they attend on Mr. H.'s instruction a single hour without advantage to their souls.

§ III. *The Sunday-school teacher judged by his fellow-teachers.* The Teacher who came from God, and from whom we derive the substance of all religious instruction, was *perfect*. We are safe, therefore, in comparing our temper and our manner of life and conversation, in every sphere and pursuit, with that which he exhibited. Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.

But we are surrounded by witnesses. Every thing we say and do is observed. Those who make themselves at all conspicuous, either by coming out and separating themselves from the thoughtless and profane, by a public profession of Christ before men, or by the less conspicuous, though perhaps not less responsible, act of teaching others the way of life and peace, must expect to be watched very closely. If those who are about them in their daily walk are looking for the influence of religion upon their temper and conduct, much more shall they look for and expect it, who see them in holy time, engaged in holy duties, acting, as we have a right to suppose, under the full influence of the world to come, and solemnly urged, by every thing around them, to the most devout and faithful discharge of duty.

It is unquestionably true, that teachers in Sunday-schools are well situated to judge righteously respecting each other. Their occupation brings them into some degree of mutual acquaintance. The object they have in view is a common object. The means used are, in most important respects, substantially the same; and the advantageous employ-

ment of these means requires a devotedness of spirit and labour, the degree of which varies according to the views, habits and feelings of each individual. It is the manner and degree of a teacher's labour on which the judgment of his fellows is passed; and it respects,

1. His demeanour before his class. If this is careless, light, or offensive, the effect is very apparent. And the body of teachers has a right to require and expect of each member that he shall exert no influence prejudicial to the general interests involved; the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The levity and thoughtlessness of a single child, much more of a whole class, is felt by every member of the school. And in the absence of all but moral discipline, nothing will control and restrain the frivolity of childhood like the steady influence of a holy example.

2. As it respects his intercourse with his fellow-labourers. Whatever there is of pride, or distance, or ill-humour in his conduct or conversation, is prejudicial to the general cause.

Mr. Z. is always finding fault with what is done or proposed. He has one of those fretful tempers that

“Wince at every touch;—
You either do too little or too much.”

He cannot coincide pleasantly with others either in opinion or measures. If he says any thing, it is either so odd that it excites a smile, or so sour and ill-natured that it occasions disgust. If a friend laments over the indifference and carelessness of teachers, he defends them, and resents the charge in their behalf. If another, whose views are brighter, and who looks with a cheerful spirit on cheer-

less objects, presents an opposite picture, Mr. Z. will conceal or deface it, or at least hang it up in such a light that there shall be no beauty or life in it.

In some form or degree many teachers have unhappy traits of character. For these they are judged by their fellows, and it is an obvious duty to correct them, not only to remove a cause of offence, but to increase and extend their influence as servants of the Lord.

3. As it respects his engagedness in the great work. In this particular a very just judgment is generally formed. It may be known whether he is always at his post and always punctual; whether in the preparation of his mind and heart for the duties of the school, in his weekly visits to the members of his class; in his attendance on the Sunday-school monthly concert, and at the social meetings of his companions in labour; in the willing share he takes in sustaining and elevating the institution; in his attention to the improvement so liberally furnished in Sunday-school periodicals, and other helps for teachers; and in his general habits and associations. In all these, and many other particulars which might be named, the teacher is judged by those around him. His fidelity or remissness is not only affecting his own character and prospects, but it is of deep importance to his class, to the teachers around him, to the school with which he is connected, and indeed to the great cause which it is his professed purpose to advance.

Let every teacher see to it that he offends not in word or deed, not only for his own sake, but because such offences hinder the prayers, embarrass the labours and discourage the efforts of others.

§ IV. *The Sunday-school teacher judged by the parents and families with which the children of his class are connected.* Some teacher who casts his eye upon this paragraph may be congratulating himself that he has nothing to fear on this score, because he is not known in the families of his class ; but is he certain that the severest judgment which could possibly be passed upon him is not for this very cause ? Has he satisfied himself that the parents of his pupils never wonder why one, who pretends to feel so much interest in their children, should not desire to see and consult with those under whose eye their daily habits are formed, and without whose influence and coöperation his task is almost hopeless ? Is he sure that neither his pupils or their parents suspect the sincerity of his professions, and attempt in vain to account for the inconsistency of his conduct ? All these things should be well understood before the teacher, who never exposes himself to the observation of the families of his pupils, congratulates himself that he escapes their judgment.

Much is expected of a Sunday-school teacher by those who expect any thing from him. He is expected to exemplify the principles which he inculcates, and his whole deportment will be regarded as a commentary upon the lessons of faith and piety which he teaches in the school. Whatever is expected of the minister of the gospel, (so far as their offices correspond,) is expected of the Sunday-school teacher ; and the inconsistencies which so often deform the character, and abridge the influence of the former, will, in like manner, though in a different degree, affect the latter.

The office of a Sunday-school teacher is a holy

office. It is not constituted or entered upon with those external rites and ceremonies which ordinarily give such a character to an office : but nothing can be more solemn than its relations and duties, and nothing higher or more sacred than the interests it involves.

When a teacher visits, therefore, he is expected to carry with him a holy influence. Being risen with Christ, it is presumed he has crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. And the eyes of parents and children are turned upon him for an example of all that is honest, pure, lovely and of good report. What an amazing influence would be exerted upon the world by Sunday-school teachers, if each one were faithful and punctual in visiting the members of his class, and always fulfilled such expectations as these !

But some teachers, who are willing to visit the members of their classes, exert no such influence as this, nor do they attempt it. They inquire, it may be, very affectionately, for the health and prosperity of the pupil and the family ; but there is no light, no holy impression, no savour of piety to mark their presence or their progress. We would not desire to have the teacher of a Sunday-school obtruding himself upon the family of his pupil with a sermon, or an exhortation, or a reproof ; nor would we suffer him to disgust or offend them by the set phrases or unmeaning cant which have been the destroyers of so much religious influence ; but we would have him observe times and seasons ; he should be humble, courteous, and without hypocrisy. And we will venture to say, that any teacher, with such manners,

“Whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause,”

will never be repulsed.

The teacher is judged by the parents and family in the effect of his instructions upon the children. A shrewd German once told us, that he had been looking for five years to see what effect this going to Sunday-school had upon his children; whether they were any more obedient, patient, forgiving, peaceable and industrious; but he had looked in vain; and whether the fault was in the school or in the teacher, he could not tell. We convinced him that a good Sunday-school had produced, and would always produce, in some degree, the fruits he had been looking for; and if they failed to appear, the teacher must answer for it. “Well,” said he, “it must be a miserable poor teacher, to be sure, that can’t do a child any real good in five years, or even in five months.”

§ V. *The Sunday-school teacher judged by his own life in the world.*—There are few posts of usefulness among men which have less in them to attract the ambitious and aspiring than the Sunday-school teacher’s. We admit that there is something to gratify pride, and the love of control, and dictation and superiority; but, at best, the opportunity is very limited, and the cares and trials of the place are soon found to overbalance any supposed qualification of this kind.

Humble and obscure as the office is, a judgment is passed on the incumbent by the world. A friend of ours, some years since, was persuaded to make a profession of religion. Whether she was truly con-

verted to God, He only knows ; but she was thought to be a suitable person to admit to the privileges of the people of God : and soon after the public profession of her faith she was induced to become a Sunday-school teacher. By the friends and companions whose circle she had forsaken, her conduct was watched with peculiar interest ; they had known her devotion to the gods of this world, and they felt a secret hope that she would return to them, and testify against the cause she had so unexpectedly (and, as they thought, whimsically) espoused. They watched her manner towards them, and their first impression was, that if she had really embraced the religion of the gospel, they should have some of her counsels and admonitions ; and they had even prepared themselves to resist any effort she might be disposed to make to disturb their quiet : but their precaution was needless. She never troubled them with a single expression of her new views, and though she met them often, and often under circumstances favourable to the introduction of the subject, she always seemed as much inclined to avoid it as they were.

How far she entered into the plans and habits of religious people, was another subject of curious investigation with them. She never knew how often the inquiry passed round in the circle of her former companions, “ Well, what do you hear of Louisa — ? Is she *really* given up yet to her new way of thinking ? Does she go with those gloomy faces to conference and prayer-meetings ? ”

The farther they pushed their inquiries, the more plainly they saw that she was not prepared to labour and deny herself, and endure reproach for the sake of her new faith ; and this strengthened their

confidence that she would ultimately return to their enjoyments, and acknowledge her mistake in leaving them.

But when they heard she had become a *Sunday-school teacher*, they supposed the matter was decided; they should now see a very great change in her. "The very thought of teaching children to be religious, was enough to make one grave; but actually teaching the Bible, and hymns, must be a new business to Louisa —."

Let it not be supposed that they consulted about these things. Each one looked on for herself: but their opinions were as much alike as if they had been compared and settled with great deliberation. Still they saw no change in Louisa —. She dressed, she visited, she conversed, she amused herself just as she did before, and all her worldly companions whose eyes were upon her, concluded that her heart was not in it. She was dragged into such employment, and therefore suffered it to affect her habits as slightly as possible. Hence, they formed their views of Sunday-schools, and Sunday-school teachers generally; and hence, too, they were led to suppose that religion itself was merely an outward act—a change of associates.

Observe now the contrast. Margaret S., in the same town, became a professor of religion early in the summer of 1830. She had been a member of the same circle. God was pleased to open her eyes upon her guilty and wretched state, and to humble her soul under his mighty hand. Her sorrow, which endured for a night, was peculiarly bitter, but the joy which came in the morning was transporting. She threw her whole heart into the cause of the Saviour who had given

it to her, and without any delay or reserve consecrated herself, and all her strength and influence to the advancement of his kingdom in the salvation of souls. She neglected no opportunity of rebuking, exhorting and admonishing her former companions; and they felt that she had left their world, and their gods, and their society, and had actually made herself (by the grace of God) a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth. She also took her place in the Sunday-school, and filled it like one who feels that everlasting interests are involved. Her very countenance and manner indicate that she teaches as one who expects to give account for every minute and every word; and she uses the Scripture as if she feels that it is all given by inspiration of God, and is able to make wise unto salvation. Her dress and deportment have become simple, and they are evidently no longer matters of anxiety, except so far as they affect her in the service of her Master: and in the heat of summer, and the cold of winter, in sunshine and storm, at home and abroad, she is always the plain, consistent, cheerful, and pious Margaret S.; and whenever she is mentioned, as she often is, by her former companions, it is always with kindness and respect, and always with an obvious momentary depression, under the thought that she is safe and they are in danger. "One thing we can say of Margaret S.; she is sincere; she believes she is right, and she certainly deserves credit for consistency."

"How well she taught them many a one will feel
Unto their dying day; and when they lie
On the grave's brink, unfearing and composed,
Their speechless souls will bless the teacher
Whose voice exhorted, and whose footsteps led
Unto the way of life."

In different spheres of life, and with different degrees of precision, every Sunday-school teacher is judged by the world, and its judgment is generally rational and just. Though this of itself may be of inconsiderable importance, as a motive, we are sure that the influence of the Sunday-school teacher would be greatly increased and extended if the world could always take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. The evidences of having been in such transforming society, are to be found in the meekness, love, patience, fidelity, zeal, and consistency with which he does the will of his heavenly Father.

§ VI. *The Sunday-school teacher judged by his class in the world.* Every Sunday-school child is supposed to enjoy superior advantages. The personal friendship and instruction of the teacher, which he shares in common with his six or eight companions; the use of the library; and the moral influence of the services and associations of the school-room, are among the most prominent of these advantages.

If we meet a Sunday-school boy we expect to find him courteous, intelligent, and well-behaved; and any thing like gross rudeness, profaneness, or other open vice, surprises us.

The teacher of every class assumes a personal responsibility for the character and conduct of those under his care. He enters into an implied covenant with the friends of Sunday-schools generally, and more particularly with his fellow-labourers in the same section of the field, that so far as these six, eight or ten children are concerned, the Sunday-school shall do all for them which it is capable of doing; that no reproach shall come upon the institution, or on those who are engaged in its service,

through the misconduct of this class, provided any labour, skill or prayers of his can, by any means, prevent it. "I feel," he may say, "that this is justly required of me. The motives by which I profess to be influenced, the subjects on which I am to give instruction, the interests involved, the holy time which is devoted to the purpose, and the uncertainty which attends every opportunity to do good, all conspire to give solemnity and high importance to the office, and make it just and right that solemn obligations should be imposed upon me."

But how few are there who suffer such thoughts to occupy their minds? We often meet children in the street, and when opportunity offers, inquire if they attend Sunday-school; and their answers, in almost every case, indicate too distinctly the unfaithfulness or negligence of their teachers.

"Well, my boy, you go to the Sunday-school, I suppose? Hey? You go to the Sunday-school, I suppose? Yes. Where do you go? Up here. To what church is the school attached? I don't know. Do you not go to church? No, I don't go. Have you a father and a mother? I have got a mother. Who is your teacher? I don't know his name. Do you never have to speak to him at school and to call him by name? No. Has he never been to see you? No. Suppose you should be sick, and want to see him, how could you send for him if you do not know his name? I don't know. Do you like to go to school? Well enough. How long have you been? Two or three years, or less. Were you at school last Sunday? No, I ha'n't been for four or five Sundays. Have you been sick? No. Why have you not been? 'Cause, I thought I wouldn't. Has your teacher been to

see why you were absent? Not as I know of. Have you had a book from the library? Had what, did you say? I asked if you have had a book from the library? I don't know what you mean. Have you no library in your school? Not as I know of."

Is it believed that in all this time we formed no judgment of that boy's teacher, and that no such inquiries as the following suggested themselves to our mind?

Is it possible that in all the intercourse between that teacher and his pupil there has been no occasion to use his name? no call at the house? no visit to the widowed mother? no direction where any member of his class might find him? no present of a testament or hymn-book? nothing by which even his name has become known to his class?

Is it possible that such a heedless boy can be absent from the school three or four successive Sabbaths without exciting the anxiety of his teacher? Did it not once occur to him that an accident, or a violent disease, might have removed him suddenly from the world, cut off all his purposes, and made it utterly impossible for either of them to redeem a lost hour, or to retrieve a lost opportunity to do or to get good? Did he never think that his pupil might have found evil companions? that at the very moment when he was pledged, as his teacher, to have him under his own eye and instruction, he was openly profaning the Sabbath, setting at naught the restraints and counsels of his lonely mother, while the adversary of his soul was leading him captive at his will?

Who would not judge him for these things?

"I thought," says one, "that James Arnold went

to Sunday-school, but yet he is almost always about home on the Sabbath, and does more mischief than all the other boys together, when he is at home. What kind of a teacher has he? I should really like to know."

A citizen met two boys on the Sabbath morning, on their way to Sunday-school, tossing a ball. He asked them to desist, lest they should do some injury. They followed him with shouts and insults till he was out of hearing. Did he form no judgment of the character and influence of Sunday-school teaching on them?

A Sunday-school is dismissed. The children rush out with violence and noise; pushing and striking each other, and for the time present a most painful scene of tumult and disorder. The congregation is assembling for worship; the eyes of all are drawn to the place of egress of the school, and the expressions are, "How those children do act!" "Can that be the Sunday-school?" "What a disgrace that is!" "What kind of instruction must they have to leave their school in such a manner?" "What sort of control can these children be under?"

The conduct of every child of that group is a fair criterion of the faithfulness, skill and success of his teacher. And the world has a perfect right to judge of the institution and its servants by the conduct of those who are or have been under its influence.

§ VII. *The Sunday-school teacher judged by the Judge of all the earth.* We have thus submitted the Sunday-school teacher to the judgment of himself; of his class; of his fellow-teachers; of the families to which his pupils belong, and to the

world : we are now to contemplate him in entirely new relations.

With one whose views of responsibility are at all just, "it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment." On the part of others there is so much blindness, prejudice, haste and mistake, and on the part of the individual himself so much selfishness, corruption and perverseness, that very little reliance is to be placed on the opinions men have of each other. There are varieties of natural temper and humour ; there are faults of domestic training, or other education ; and there are peculiar circumstances affecting the character and habits of each individual, favourably or unfavourably. A perfect knowledge of all these is necessary to a correct judgment ; and hence the injustice with which teachers in Sunday-schools are sometimes chargeable in their remarks about each other.

But where the teacher now stands there is no danger of misjudgment. Every principle and trait of the character, every circumstance of the life, every thought, purpose, act and word, every thing done that should not have been done, and every thing omitted which should have been done ; in a word, the life and heart are presented and spread out in the broad blaze of eternal light, before the eye of created and uncreated Intelligence. Here judgment is rendered to every man according to his deeds.

It is surprising how little the prospect of such judgment to come affects the mind. How seldom the conviction that TO-MORROW MAY BE OUR JUDGMENT DAY lays hold on our careless thoughts and worldly habits ! But it is verily so. The teacher who leaves his class on the Sabbath expects to see them again. He expects another meeting, and hopes

to improve it more faithfully than ever before. It scarcely passes his mind that his last word of rebuke, persuasion, warning and entreaty may be spoken; that his last work as a Sunday-school teacher is done; that his account, as to this most sacred and responsible department of his stewardship, is closed and sealed; and that his next meeting with those who have been for months or years under his care, will be in the presence of God, and for the final judgment both of himself and his pupils.

It is wisely ordered, that the season of our probation is concealed from us, though it is passing strange that our minds and plans are so slightly affected by the uncertainty which attends every step and every breath. But we are departing from our purpose.

The points on which the last judgment of the Sunday-school teacher will turn, are such as we do not sufficiently recognise in our present low and sinful state of being. The inquiry there will be with what motives, in what spirit, for what end, and for whose sake did you labour in the Sunday-school? and this inquiry will be propounded by the soul to itself. Our Sabbaths will come back to us one by one in fearful succession; and though they will flit by us like a vision, there will be power in the soul to examine each with perfect distinctness. The closet, neglected or frequented, will end up its testimony. Our Bible, our question book, the place of the teachers' meeting, and the place of the Sunday-school monthly concert, will furnish their share of the evidence. A voice will come from the form we occupied, from the spot where we kneeled, and from every teacher and every pupil who witnessed our manner of life and

conversation. And, most fearful of all, there will come up that little circle of children and youth who constituted our particular charge, and with whose forms, and features and voices we were so long familiar. They come, as we do, to receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad; and the influence of our connexion with them, whether for evil or for good, is to be all drawn out and defined, with all the results and consequences to our own souls and theirs; and the final irreversible doom of their souls and ours is now to be pronounced.

The child that was suffered to leave us, and to leave the solemnities of the Sabbath, and to take his place with scorners, without an effort or a prayer for his return, is there; and he is borne down to eternal death under the weight of unrepented, unforgiven sins. We shall there find that something more might have been done than we did to persuade him to forsake the company of the ungodly and return to wisdom's ways. We shall find, perhaps, that by only one hour's walk, one faithful admonition, or one earnest prayer, we might have been the means of saving his soul from death, and hiding the multitude of his sins.

The child that we suffered to remain at ease while the great question of his eternal interest was undecided; whose wandering, vacillating mind we never faithfully laboured to fix on the point to which all others are subordinate; and whose heedless frivolity gave us neither pain nor apprehension, is there; and it will be seen that his indecision and frivolity have cost him the life of his soul, and that we never felt a fear for him, or uttered a word, or made an effort to save him, though we saw for

weeks, and months, and years that his foolish heart was darkened and filled with vanities.

But we cannot extend these remarks. Let teachers try to feel that the judgment to come is something real and sensible, and that their relation to their classes involves some of the most fearful issues of that great event. Let no Sabbath pass without this solemn inquiry, O, my soul, is thine own peace made with God, and art thou pure from the blood of all others?

CHAPTER XIV.

TEACHERS' MEETINGS.

§ I. *Design and uses.* We do not regard teachers' meetings as *essential* to the existence of a Sunday-school. Schools have long existed, and good has been done without them. But the question is not as to the mere existence of the school. It is not a problem given to find out with how little labour and self-denial we can get along and do some good. The inquiry of every devoted teacher relates to the healthful and vigorous action of the school, to the way in which the greatest amount of good may be accomplished in the shortest possible time, cost what it will. Our opportunities, say they, are exceedingly brief, and are every moment passing away beyond our reach forever. Let us, while we have the opportunity, do what our hands find to do with our might.

Many suppose that the work of a Sunday-school teacher can be very easily accomplished by any

one who has a benevolent heart, and is willing to give up two or three hours of the Sabbath for that purpose. But this alone cannot awaken in the minds of scholars a spirit of inquiry, or supply the knowledge which such a spirit demands when it is once excited, and unless this be done, the object of the Sunday-school institution is not gained. Thence experience has taught that meetings of teachers for mutual instruction and preparation to meet their classes are so far indispensable that no school can flourish in a high degree without them. A practised eye can at a moment's glance discern a difference between a school conducted by teachers who have no system to promote their self-improvement, and one conducted by a well trained corps, systematically tasking their mental energies to promote their usefulness.

We know a band of teachers who resolved to hold such a meeting so long as two teachers would attend. It has been generally attended by about thirty or forty teachers, and there are many that can testify that it has been blessed to the salvation of their souls. It is considered the life of the school. It is too evident to be unnoticed, that the teachers who esteem it a privilege to attend have in almost every instance a full and regular class on the Sabbath; whilst those who do not, have but a small and irregular attendance.

The best schools in our country owe their pre-eminent success in a great degree to weekly meetings of the teachers for mutual instruction and prayer.

The principal advantages of preparing for the important duties of instruction in social meetings, are familiarity with the word of God, a knowledge of

its sacred truths, the experience of its converting power over the impenitent who may be associated with us, and its sanctifying influence upon all our hearts and consequent preparation for usefulness.

As matter of mechanical arrangement, the assembling of teachers, at stated intervals, is one of the most important parts of the system. It enables them to ascertain the progress of the school and the best means of removing obstacles and increasing facilities. It establishes habits of punctuality and regular attendance on duty. It is still more important as an opportunity of uniting teachers in their work, strengthening the influence of evangelical motives, awakening a spirit of life and action, provoking to fidelity and perseverance, and acquainting them with each other's burdens, that they may bear them together and so fulfil the law of love.

§ II. *Time and mode of conducting such meetings.* Saturday evening has been generally regarded as the best time for holding them, because the teachings of the Sabbath morning must be more efficient while the impressions received during the study of the lesson are fresh upon the mind. To insure the success of such meetings two points demand attention: the preparation for it, and the mode of conducting it.

(1.) *The preparation.* In regard to this the following considerations appear to us worthy of special note.

1. Every teacher should feel himself under solemn obligation to contribute all he can towards the improvement of the rest. Hence he should commence the study of the lesson on Monday, in order to have as much time for it as possible. And

it would be well to carry in his pocket a **THOUGHT BOOK**, on each page of which a verse might be written, so that thoughts could be put down as they occur during the week. He should first consider the general design of the passage, and then the particular import of all its words and phrases, figures and allusions. This will give a zest to conversation at the meeting, and fit each one to compare notes with his associates.

2. Each one should depend upon original investigation for a knowledge of the lesson, rather than upon the reading of a commentary. The Sunday-school teacher should be emphatically a teacher of the Scriptures. To this end, he should, as far as possible, derive his illustrations from the Scriptures themselves.

3. In order to save time and to sustain the interest of the meeting, all tedious readings should be avoided.

4. We should pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or all our investigations will be in vain. Teachers should pray for each other as well as for their scholars. Before assembling at the teachers' meeting, the teachers should spend considerable time in their closets. Prayer is the great means of making teachers' meetings interesting and profitable.

(2.) *Mode of conducting the meeting.*

1. Punctuality is all-important.

2. The exercises should always be introduced by prayer. Let that prayer be short, but let every heart be prepared to give in it full utterance to its fervent desires for God's blessing by previous meditation and devotion. This will tend to banish levity, and induce an appropriate seriousness.

3. It is very desirable that the superintendent should generally preside.

4. When the meeting is thus organized, the person presiding should commence a free and familiar conversation by asking questions of those around him, in the manner that shall seem best adapted to quicken the spirit of inquiry, and to elicit a friendly interchange of opinion. At this point he should most steadily aim, and spare no pains to gain it. The faculty of conducting a meeting so as to awaken thought, and draw forth the expression of it, and give a right direction to it, is one of inestimable worth, and one which may be greatly improved by culture.

5. In order that the meeting may have this character, no books should be habitually used in it, except the Bible, a Concordance, and a Bible Dictionary. The practice of spreading a number of books on the table to be consulted and read, embarrasses more than it assists.

6. After the lesson has been calmly and freely discussed, and the import of the text is clearly seen; the next thing to be done is to select such simple forms of expression as will convey the ideas of the inspired writer distinctly to the mind of the child. In doing this, how often do the most laborious teachers fail? And if there be a failure here, the time and effort spent in studying the lesson are almost lost.

7. Not only should simple language be sought to address the understanding of the scholar, but every teacher should classify and remember those truths of the lesson which are most fitted to affect the conscience, and to produce conviction of sin. To this every thing else should be made subordinate. To

convert and save the soul is the grand object which the devoted Sunday-school teacher ever seeks, and for this he should pray and labour in the constant expectation of immediate results.

When teachers' meetings are thus conducted they cannot but increase an interest. Their influence must be felt by all connected with the school. Endowed as children are with the love of knowledge, they cannot but feel its impulse when it is simplified and brought within their comprehension; and endowed as they are with a conscience, they will be affected with that holy truth which declares its heavenly origin in the fact that it commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

"Would you be a successful teacher," says one, "would you be the honoured instrument of saving souls; O! learn to study your lessons in the closet. Begin at the commencement of the week, and let no day pass without a devout attention to the subject. Read, reflect and pray daily; make yourself acquainted with the whole subject, and then, and not till then, are you prepared for the teachers' meeting.

"Thus prepared, permit me to press upon you the duty of always being present at this most delightful meeting. With a heart full of love to souls, and of ardent desire to do the whole will of God, go to your fellow-teachers, and as you commune together, Jesus himself will meet you, as he did the disciples on their way to Emmaus. You will get new views of duty, enlarged conceptions of doctrinal truth, and a zeal according to knowledge. You will feel the school lie near your heart. New beauties will be discovered in your Bible, and new strength

obtained to do the will of God. Forsake not, then the teachers' meeting."

§ III. *The monthly concert.* Some time previous to the year 1822, the first Friday evening of each month was extensively observed, in one section of the country, as a season of special prayer for the divine blessing on Sunday-schools. And a Sunday-school periodical published at that time in Utica, N. Y., advocated the measure, but proposed the second Monday evening of the month as the best time.

The Board of Managers of the American Sunday-school Union were asked to suggest a suitable season for this good purpose; but feeling the importance of unanimity and cordiality to the success of it, any suggestion on the subject was deferred till the views of the teachers and friends of Sunday-schools could be ascertained.

In the mean time public opinion was expressed in a variety of forms; and there seemed to be but one voice, and that was in favour of instituting a separate monthly concert of prayer for Sunday-schools; and at last one of the most numerous and important associations of Sunday-school teachers in the country passed a resolution, requesting the Board of Managers of the American Sunday-school Union to "recommend the *second* Monday evening of the month to be observed by all conductors, and other friends of Sunday-schools throughout the United States, as a SUNDAY-SCHOOL CONCERT OF PRAYER."

In compliance with the views thus ascertained, and guided wholly by a desire to adopt the time which, judging from the information before them,

would be most agreeable to those concerned, the Board, in September, 1824, did recommend the observance of the second Monday of every month as a season of prayer for Sunday-schools.

It has sometimes been asked whether the cause of the Redeemer is promoted by a separate concert of prayer for Sunday-schools.

If we advert for a moment to the object of a monthly concert, we may be able to decide more correctly. The apostolic injunction is, In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. That our prayers and supplications may be fervent and intelligent, we need to feel not only the extent and urgency of our wants, but some degree of confidence that he whom we supplicate is able to supply them. Our own wants we can know if we examine ourselves, and the wants of others are to be learned by observation and inquiry; and when known, they become subjects of prayer. I should never know that my neighbour's house was desolated by disease and death, and his spirit overwhelmed with anguish, if I never left my closet. The case of the labouring and heavy-laden sinner would never excite my sympathy if I held no communion with my fellow-men, by means of which I may know their condition. And so the wants of the church to which I belong, of the church universal, and of a world lying in wickedness, are brought home to the heart and consciences of men by intercourse with each other, personally or through the press.

The object to be accomplished by Sunday-schools is distinct from all others, and must ever be so; and is to be contemplated distinctly, in order to understand or feel its importance.

The agents (superintendents and teachers) in this department of benevolence have difficulties and discouragements, hopes and fears, plans and motives of a peculiar character. True, they have at heart the cause of Bibles, missions, tracts, &c., and are found actively engaged in advancing it; and are seen at the assemblies of the people where that cause is advocated and patronised. But should it surprise us if the instruction of six or eight children, from week to week in the precepts and doctrines of the Bible, with all the preparatory and collateral duties, should engross a larger share of their thoughts and affections than any kindred object, or all of them together? And if there is this absorbing interest and responsibility in the Sunday-school teachers' work, shall we not urge them to seek, unitedly and frequently, the direction and blessing of God, and to avail themselves of every measure which can be devised to strengthen, encourage and enlighten them in their work of faith and labour of love?

The substance of the argument of objectors is, that the Sunday-school cause is so connected with the other great plans of Christian benevolence, in the hearts and prayers of the children of Zion, that it should not be separated from them; and that it cannot be separated from them without mutual disadvantage. We say, on the other hand, that the cause of missions itself demands, and would of course justify a monthly concert of prayer; and if properly conducted, the interest of Christians would be fully sustained in it. And we trust all our fellow-labourers would not fail to be found among the worshippers and contributors at such a concert. But we may say also, that the cause of Sunday-

schools demands, and of course will justify a monthly concert of prayer; and we wish the friends of missions, Bibles, tracts, &c., though not personally engaged in Sunday-school labours, would come to it, and unite with us in prayer and praise to the God whose blessings alone gives success to all our enterprises.

(1.) *How the Sunday-school Monthly Concert should be attended.*—A sense of our dependence on God ought to be a habit of mind. The moment a plan is suggested, a labour undertaken, a difficulty encountered, or a disappointment suffered, in that moment the spirit within us should turn, habitually and without effort, to the Father of our spirits and the God of all grace, and from him, in silent or audible supplications, light, strength, wisdom, patience, faith, and hope should be implored.

Especially should we endeavour, by all perseverance, to establish such a habit of mind, when our occupation is such as to make the grace and direction of God peculiarly and constantly necessary. Such, if we mistake not, is the occupation of those for whose benefit the Sunday-school monthly concert was established.

So obvious is the duty of prayer, in some form or other, that no teacher will be found to deny its obligation. But do not many regard it as a sort of conditional task imposed on us to be performed in order to obtain a personal blessing, as if God had said, "if you will pray to me I will do thus and so to you?" Is the connexion which God has established between the prayer and the blessing well understood? Or is it duly considered, that the frame of mind and state of heart in which alone acceptable prayer can be offered to God, is the only

frame of mind and state of heart in which the desired gift is likely to prove a blessing?

We have never been surprised by the complaint that the Sunday-school monthly concert is neglected. If the right spirit is not carried to the place of assembly, and if there is nothing there to excite it, we cannot wonder at its absence. A humble, penitent, believing soul is miserably entertained by tedious, desultory prayers, long hymns, dull tunes, and commonplace exhortations. And surely the indifferent and careless will not long seek even amusement for a vacant hour from such an uninviting scene.

The monthly concert can be appreciated best by the prepared worshipper. A survey of the magnitude of the work in which he is engaged should be taken, and a sense of the weakness, and blindness, and sinfulness under which he labours, and the evidence of which must and will attend his best efforts, should be felt; and faith in the power and grace of God should be brought into lively exercise; and the thought of the thousands who are with him in this labour of love, and whose steps are directed with his to the altar of incense, should animate him; and when he enters the place of prayer, it should seem a privileged place—a mount of glorious vision.

He finds assembled there a company of his fellow-teachers, of various character, but there are many principles, motives and feelings common to them all. To examine and illustrate these principles, to weigh and purify these motives, and to draw out a frank expression of these feelings in prayer and exhortation, are among the objects for which they are assembled, and they have but one heart and one prayer for its accomplishment.

Now we have no doubt, that wherever the Sunday-school monthly concert shall be thus observed, and its observance shall become as universal as the present neglect of it, the change will be felt in a greater or less degree by every teacher and every child in our country. Such a spirit in our Sunday-schools would be like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. The thing has never been done. The experiment is yet to be tried. It is yet to be seen what a monthly congregation of one hundred thousand Sunday-school teachers for prayer and mutual encouragement will accomplish. But it never will be seen until there is more unanimity of views on such subjects among the professed friends of Zion; and certainly not while feelings of hostility towards it, such as have been sometimes expressed, continue to be entertained by religious people.

(2.) *Of the proceedings at the Sunday-school Monthly Concert.*—Notice of the Sunday-school monthly concert should be always given from the pulpit, and also in the school. It is a subject of complaint that many ministers do not make it one of their regular appointments, as they do the more general monthly concert, on the first Monday evening of the month. It is observed that those who assign it a place in their appointments, often forget to notice it:—that few ministers are in the habit of attending it when appointed, and that fewer still make a systematic effort to render it a season of profit and interest. These and many other things are said about ministers; but we are inclined to believe that those who find fault are not without blame in this matter.

We hope that every minister who reads these re-

marks will make a memorandum in some sure place to enable him on the Sabbath preceding the second Monday of each month, publicly and particularly to mention to his congregation, that the Sunday-school monthly concert of prayer will be attended the next evening, in such a place, and at such an hour; and let all the people understand the object and their interest in it.

It is said, too, that parents are not inclined, generally, to join the teachers of their children, one evening of the month, in asking the blessing of God on parental and Sunday-school instruction,—in consequence of this, it is supposed that children think the Sunday-school monthly concert is some business-matter,—of no concern to them or anybody else, save those who attend upon it.

Hence, it has come to pass, that instead of the delightful conviction, that fifty or one hundred thousand teachers, and many hundred thousand parents, are bowing down before the throne of heavenly grace in different parts of our land, and making common supplication unto God for his blessing, at the same consecrated hour, we are pained with the thought that perhaps in the very next town, or district, or county, the season has never been observed, or has been set apart and neglected, or it is so attended as to dishearten even the few who dare not abandon it.

Now there is surely a fault in this matter. The Sunday school monthly concert of prayer might be made a season of intense interest. The second Mondays of every month might become stages in the progress of Christian effort and Christian education, at which new impulses should be felt, and new energy acquired—at which the love of Christ should

be shed abroad anew in our hearts, and its constraining influence over us be greatly increased—at which the objects of our care and anxiety should be, by faith, presented in one vast assemblage before a prayer-hearing (and a prayer-answering) God; and at which we should come where Christ is, and bring the multitude of children with us, that he may take them in his arms and put his hands on them and bless them.

To secure this most desirable object, some system of conducting the services should be established by each company of praying people who are disposed to observe the season, though this system should be accommodated to circumstances. Some suggestions on this subject may not be unseasonable.

1. The invitation to attend should be universal, as the object itself is one of universal interest. Every man, woman and child who have (or who desire to have) hearts to pray for God's blessing on Sunday-schools, should feel that there is a place at the Sunday-school monthly concert expressly for them.

2. Suitable selections from the Scriptures should be seasonably made, and portions of from fifteen to thirty verses should be read at suitable intervals, giving some prophetic view of the future glory of the church, or some example of the efficacy of prayer, or exhortation to importunity in our petitions.

3. The hymns sung should be adapted to the season, and expressive of the feelings, not of children, or teachers exclusively, but of all who love the interests of Sunday-schools. Two or three verses only should be sung at a time.

4. There is no apology for any school that is destitute of interesting intelligence for the monthly concert. The paltry sum of six or eight cents a week for some periodical devoted to or embracing this subject may be obtained, and will put every school in the United States in possession of Sunday-school intelligence enough, of a most animating and interesting character, too, to occupy, in reading, two or three whole evenings. To select the most interesting and appropriate articles is the difficulty; and this should always be done before the meeting, and all the matter so selected should be read at two or three proper intervals, and with suitable reference to the order and connexion of subjects. Of whatever kind this communication may be, it should not be deferred until most of the prayers have been offered: for the very design of this exercise is to direct to proper objects of prayer, or to excite to fervency of spirit and to the lively exercise of faith, by the exhibition of suitable motives. When an address is given, pains should be taken to avoid prolixity, formality, and dulness; and in the selection of religious intelligence, tedious and minute details should be omitted, and such articles only, chosen, as are concise, new, and interesting.

5. Prayers on these occasions should never exceed five or six minutes. No one thing tends more to damp the spirit of devotion, than the undue length of prayers. It furnishes a powerful temptation to impatience, to hypocrisy, and to indulge in wandering thoughts.

6. Prayer should be confined, as much as possible, to the peculiar object which has occasioned the meeting. Those who lead should fix their own thoughts and desires on some select topic of sup-

plication, and a mind that apprehends in any degree the boundless capacity of the institution; that has been accustomed to survey the multitude and variety of blessings which Sunday-schools have conferred, and will confer in a still more bountiful measure upon our world: or that feels the weakness and insignificance of poor humanity, when it attempts, in its unaided strength, to heal the blind, or raise the dead to life; such a mind will find more difficulty in choosing the topic than in spending the fervour of a single devotional exercise upon it.

7. It is too common for the first person who leads, to ramble over the whole ground, and in a loose and general way to mention every subject of prayer that occurs to him. Now, certainly, it would be much more becoming, if the person first called upon to lead in prayer, should, as just now intimated, select some particular topics, and confine his petitions, for the most part to these. Then, let the next select from the remaining subjects appropriate to the occasion, some one, or more, and so of the rest. And thus the apostle's general rule, "let all things be done decently and in order," will be complied with; and also that other most comprehensive rule, "let all things be done to edification."

8. A collection should always be taken after the Sunday-school monthly concert. Praying and doing and giving for Christ's kingdom are inseparably connected. If only a single mite comes from some poor widow, it may bring down untold blessings on the world.

9. The exercises should be punctually begun, and punctually closed; and should not exceed one hour and a half; for there is no necessity that we should cease from prayer when the public service is

ended ; let every man who feels the spirit of prayer retire to his closet ; and there, in secret, pour out his heart before his heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, as long as he is disposed. The loss of a few minutes at the beginning of an exercise makes punctual people very impatient, and if these few minutes are taken at the close, they become very restless.

Let brevity and point attend each part of the exercise ; let long exhortations be avoided ; let the whole service be performed with singleness of purpose and sincerity of heart, and there will be no lack of attendance at the Sunday-school monthly concert.

(4.) The blessing of God will not come down upon our Sunday-schools, until the great mass of Sunday-school teachers seek for it, not periodically, coldly, formally, but as the famished beggar craves bread for his life. There must be an humble, self-forsaking, overcoming faith in God. It will be one of the most animating tokens of success, when the great subject is distinctly and fervently remembered at the family altar, in the circle of social worshippers, and in the great assembly of God's people. But more especially shall we look to the SUNDAY-SCHOOL MONTHLY CONCERT OF PRAYER, to discern the signs of the times. If the return of the second Monday evening is hailed, from month to month by the teachers and friends of Sunday-schools in all parts of our land, as a season of great interest ; if that sacred hour bears up to the King of saints the supplications of only the one hundred thousand Sunday-school teachers who are supposed to be faithfully engaged in this work in our land, as the supplication of a single soul,—our doubts and fears, if we had them, would leave us.

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But this will be a great change. There is scarcely a feature in the present aspect of Sunday-schools, which alarms us so much as the general neglect of the Sunday-school monthly concert. More than half the schools that we have known to be established, have never yet enjoyed its privileges. When we see the monthly concert observed in all our schools; and the place of prayer crowded and solemn; and every soul feeling and owning the presence of God, we shall be ready to look for a blessing so large that there shall be scarcely room to receive it. Whatever there is of opposition or difficulty in the way of an enterprise, it will vanish before the spirit of prayer and supplication, as Dagon fell before the ark of God.

The foregoing remarks relate more particularly to monthly concerts in cities and large towns, where many teachers from different churches and denominations are accustomed to meet. When the occasion is observed by the teachers of a single school, or of the schools of one denomination, the pastor is often present. As one of the many modes of conducting such a meeting, we subjoin the following sketch of one:—

It was attended principally by the teachers of the school. The pastor presided, and the services were commenced with one or two hymns and prayers. The pastor then asked the teachers a number of questions relative to the state of the school. One mentioned the attendance, another the uses of the library, a third related some fact of interest respecting his class. This was done in the way of familiar conversation, the pastor interspersing his suggestions, remarks and words of encouragement, as the different particulars called them out

After another prayer and hymn, the inquiries and conversations were extended to other subjects ; and facts were mentioned that proved the usefulness of going after unwilling and irregular scholars, the folly of giving way to temporary discouragement, and the advantages of visiting. One of the teachers stated, that in the infant school were three children of an infidel, who only allowed them to attend because they were so intent upon it themselves. None of these statements occupied more than one or two minutes, and the observations of the pastor were thrown in in a familiar manner, so as to remove all formality, while it increased the usefulness of the conversation.

The advantages of such meetings must be obvious to every one. They freshen the interest of a pastor in the school, and keep up his acquaintance with the details of its management and progress. He cannot remain a stranger to this part of his charge, whilst he holds such a meeting with the teachers every month.

The teachers are encouraged by this attention on the part of the minister. The sense of responsibility is increased and preserved, when they know that their progress will be the subject of periodical inquiry. They are stimulated by the reports of others, and assisted by the hints which are suggested from time to time.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LIBRARY.

§ I. *Of the general character of books.* There is nothing good in our fallen world that is not liable to abuse. The *Sunday-school library* has done inestimable good; but it has not been unmingled with evil. Some people would have us believe that the evil preponderates. They say "these libraries have introduced a pernicious taste for light and fictitious reading in the shape of stories or tales," &c.

That light and fictitious books have been published and circulated to some extent in Sunday-schools, and eagerly read by thoughtless children, cannot be denied; but that there is a great mistake as to the proportion of such books, and still greater as to their source, might be easily shown. The prejudice against fiction may overdo its work. Those who would exclude it entirely from all works, would exclude some of the finest and most instructive passages of the Holy Scriptures. All will agree that what purports to be fact in conversation or in books should be fact. But various uses may be made of facts. They may be stated as evidence or as illustrations of truth; and they may also be brought into a connected story or narrative in which fictitious names and places are given, and this without any violation of the principles of truth. Thus we are told by the Publishing Committee of the London Religious Tract Society, that they "do not exclude all publications that might be considered as

of this character. Such narratives as are avowedly authentic, are only published by the committee under a full persuasion derived from satisfactory evidence of the actual occurrence of all that they relate. In such publications as do not come precisely under this description, all that is unnatural, forced and marvellous; also all love stories, or things calculated unduly to excite the passions and expectations, are particularly avoided. But when incidents have really occurred, though in the cases of various individuals rather than one, and they are combined in a natural and instructive manner, the tract is true to nature, and in the view of the committee hardly to be called a fiction. The combination of circumstances is only intended to make the instruction more clear and impressive. The story is only the vehicle: the attention of the reader is not fixed on the story as the end, but only as the means to a further end: namely, the instruction of the reader. Such a use of fiction is not conceived to be improper in the society's publications."

And so also the American Sunday-school Union apply with scrupulous fidelity the principle that excludes from children's books every thing that gives false, partial or unnatural views of life, character or duty.

Probably the most interesting class of books is that of biography; these are generally alike attractive to all ages and classes. It would be well if the subjects of biography were selected as far as practicable from the common classes of society, and it is not necessary to render them attractive to children, that they should be biographies of the young, or that they should be written otherwise than in good, plain, simple English.

We have long felt the conviction, that a vast proportion of our Sunday-school children are yet to be supplied, for the first time, with books of a suitable size and character; but there is a difficulty which it is not easy to obviate. Children feel degraded when a small book is given to them, and they seem to determine the rank they hold in the teacher's estimation by the relative size of the books which he distributes among them. If teachers would be careful to examine the children faithfully in each book, and oblige them to give a good account of it, if they desire the privileges of the library, they would soon find what books were most profitable, and be willing to submit to the teacher's discretion. It is much to be feared that on this and many other points, the fault of the pupil originates in the fault of the teacher.

We are fully persuaded, that for many years after the institution of libraries, their use was very limited, and their abuse very extensive, from the mere circumstance that the books they contained were not adapted to the capacities of children. And now that books of a proper character may be had, they find their way slowly to the shelf, and when there they are sought with less eagerness by the children, because it seems like putting them back from reading lessons to A, B, C. If teachers would make themselves familiar with the books, and excite the interest of the children in the histories they contain, it would soon be found that the simplest books would be read most, and to the best advantage. It may be considered as settled, that the library will never accomplish its high purpose until teachers feel as much interest in it, and possess as much knowledge of its contents as they require their pupils to possess.

How many teachers can tell us the leading incidents in the life of Eliot, Luther, Martyn, Alleine, Pearce, Margaretta C. Hoge, the Young Cottager, Harlan Page, Wilberforce, Richmond, Nathan Dickerman, Edwin Judd, Susan Kollock, &c.? Our position is, that every approved Sunday-school library book should be as familiar to the Sunday-school teacher as treatises in medicine, theology or jurisprudence, are to the physician, the divine and the lawyer. No part of the ground to be travelled by a Sunday-school scholar should be unknown to his teacher.

§ II. The subject opens before us a wide and interesting field of inquiry, and, as it is of vital interest to the welfare of our Sunday-schools, we make no apology for discussing it at some length. And it is important to examine, in the first place, The materials out of which a Sunday-school library should be formed. And under this head we must first determine by what rules the purchaser should be governed in the selection of a library. There must be a limit to the class of books which are suitable for this purpose; and to fix this limit we must know what are the legitimate objects or uses of a Sabbath-school library. And it is apparent that they should be in strict accordance with the design of the school itself. **THE LIBRARY IS THE TEACHER'S ADJUNCT OR AUXILIARY.** It is to carry out, illustrate, and enforce the truths which the teacher inculcates.

Of course, whatever would be a suitable subject for Sunday-school instruction is a suitable subject for a Sunday-school book; and whatever method of illustrating and enforcing religious truth would be proper for the teacher, is proper for the author.

We do not mean that the style and manner are to correspond; this is neither practicable nor desirable. We should only require that the general character and bearing of the printed instruction should be in harmony with the general character and bearing of the oral; and that both should rest on the basis of inspired truth. We should exclude, therefore, from the class of books out of which the library is to be selected all those whose **DIRECT** and **MAIN** purpose is not to aid the teacher in the business of religious instruction.

It may be objected that many pupils are so averse to religious instruction that it is as much as the teacher can do to retain them in the class, even with the most attractive books that can be furnished; and if it should be required of them to read a strictly religious work, it would surely drive them off. Hence the teacher feels bound to give them an entertaining history or some story book, with here and there a scrap of religious truth, buried in amusing anecdotes or curious narratives.

We should reply to all this, that it is far better to provide extraordinary means for extraordinary cases, than to violate a sound principle to meet an emergency. If it is really necessary to hire the child to attend the school, we would, in the first place, try to improve our mode of teaching and visiting, and adapt it more wisely to the peculiar temperament of such a pupil; and, secondly, we would procure the entertaining book from some private source, and let it be a week-day matter, entirely without and aside from the school, between the teacher and the individual scholar. In the mean time, it should be our endeavour to form in the mind of the child a more correct judgment, and to

remove those prejudices which are generally the offspring of ignorance, or a perverted taste. We cannot doubt that, under proper training, a boy may be as deeply interested in the story of Francke and his wonderful enterprises, or Pastor Oberlin or Colonel Gardiner, as in the story of Franklin or Bonaparte; nor that a girl may contemplate the extraordinary scenes through which Mrs. Judson passed, with as much interest as she would feel in the history of Mary Queen of Scots or the Lady of the Manor.

A second rule we should propose would exclude from the class of books from which a library for the use of the pupils of a Sunday-school should be selected, all such as are unsuited in character, size, style or subject, to the mass of pupils.

As to subject, we should limit the selection to such as are strictly religious, and adapted to the circumstances of childhood and youth. A grossly deistical book might be prepared with much more of religious truth in it, than can be found in many works on natural science which have free admission into our Sunday-school libraries. The principle we would maintain is simply this—that the leading subject of every Sunday-school library book should present distinctly to view one or more of the great principles of the Christian religion; and it should be wrought into the volume and exhibited in its various bearings, so that when the child has properly read the book, the truth and importance of this great principle shall make a deeper impression than any thing else about the volume. To illustrate our meaning, we will take “Susan Ellmaker,” one of the publications of the American Sunday-school

Union, the design of which is to explain and illustrate the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. There is no doubt, we think, that the child who reads this book will be readily interested in the personal history of Susan Ellmaker and of her old friend the gardener; but we apprehend that when the reading is finished, if it has been read with any degree of intelligence and serious attention, the deepest impression on the mind will be, that the dead shall surely be raised.

And not only should the subject be of this cast, but it should be sufficiently important and striking to justify its claim to such attention. Many juvenile biographies are published, which, when stripped of their ornaments, show nothing more striking in intellectual or religious character than may be found or produced in hundreds and thousands of surviving children. Some subjects are too high, others too low; some are trivial, others are ludicrous; others still are, from their very nature, inappropriate.

A third and most important point to be determined in selecting a Sunday-school library is, Who is responsible for the character of the books?

It would be well if every book proposed to be added to the library could be carefully examined beforehand by the superintendent or (where the school is connected with a particular church) by the minister. In case of their inability, the next best thing would be to have them so examined by some intelligent, judicious person connected with the school, to whom reference might be made in case any objection should arise to a particular volume. We are aware that it would be very difficult in

many schools to find a person competent to this service and willing to engage in it; but if the parents and patrons of the school consider the officers of it competent to teach religious truth, they must be supposed competent to judge of the propriety and correctness with which the same truth is taught in the library books, which are really only so many assistants to the teachers. This is all theory, however. As a matter of fact, very few libraries are supplied with books upon such an examination by anybody. The usual course is, when the money is raised to replenish the library, to commit it to some person who is going where Sunday-school books are to be had. The bookseller or keeper of the depository is told—"Here are five, ten, or twenty dollars, as the case may be, which our school has sent for books. Here is a catalogue of what we have;" or, if no catalogue is produced, "We purchased our last supply a year ago, and we want only such books as have been published within a year." If the person charged with the business happens to be familiar with the subject, (an advantage very rarely possessed,) he is shown to a particular part of the store where this kind of stock is kept, and will be told to look for himself. He has two or three hours, perhaps, in which to select from thirty to one hundred volumes, and it is sufficiently obvious that his selection must be made very much in the dark.

We might multiply illustrations of this point to almost any extent, and easily show that there is no safety for the purchaser even in what are sometimes called Sunday-school depositories, but in a personal knowledge of the character of the books, or of the

source whence they are obtained and to which they may be traced.*

The class of books to which such a responsibility attaches probably exceeds five hundred volumes. If the purchaser requires a larger supply, we think he is bound to obtain it on the personal religious responsibility of some one known to him, and who knows the character of the book or books purchased—or else upon his own examination of them before they are placed upon the shelves. A less rigid rule would not secure the end, nor is it required by the circumstances of the case.

§ III. This leads us to examine the nature and cause of the great demand for Sunday-school books, which is so universally pleaded as a reason for haste and an apology for carelessness in the selection of libraries.

We hold that there are good and unexceptionable books to be had at a fair price, enough to supply

* Of the many instances we might give of the danger of receiving books into Sunday-school libraries without competent examination or guarantee, we copy the following from the New York Christian Advocate and Journal:—

In a Sunday-school manual now before us, published at Worcester, Mass., we find that good old *doxology* by Bishop Ken, of which Mr. Montgomery speaks in the most exalted terms, is sadly mutilated. It seems to have been the design of the revisers of this excellent verse to keep out of sight the doctrine of the Trinity. The old version reads thus:—

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him, all creatures here below,
Praise him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.”

The new version thus:

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him, all creatures here below,
Praise him above, celestial train,
Let the whole heavens resound his name.”

the legitimate wants of Sunday-school libraries, the character of which is fully guarantied, and of course there can be no necessity for introducing those that are not known to be suitable. And we moreover hold that an addition of from thirty to fifty volumes a year to a common Sunday-school library is as much as the interests of the school require or justify. These positions we shall attempt to establish.

A large majority of the Sunday-schools in this country contain each less than one hundred pupils. The latest returns we have seen do not give an average of sixty. In eighty-one schools in the city of New York, the returns show an average of one hundred and eighty pupils. Probably this far exceeds the number in actual attendance. We have seen no returns from the schools of Philadelphia for several years. In the largest school in New York, which returns six hundred pupils, only two hundred and sixty attended in March, 1837; and of the whole number, but about two-thirds could read the Scriptures at all. We presume that the time has not been known in that school when more than two hundred pupils took books from the library at one time. In ten of their largest schools, in which there is an average return of two hundred and eighty scholars, they had an average attendance of one hundred and eighty in March, 1838, and an average library of nine hundred volumes. A faithful investigation would probably show that of these one hundred and eighty not more than one-half use the library. Some are incapable of using it; from ignorance or infancy; others have the same books, and more than they can read, at home; some have no desire to use it, and a few, perhaps, are denied the use of it, as a punishment. Here,

then, we have ten volumes of religious reading to each scholar, or eighteen years' reading at the rate of a volume a week, without taking into account the additions which are made during that period, amounting (at an annual increase of only fifty volumes) to nine hundred volumes more ! In one of the ten schools which make up the above average, we find one thousand one hundred volumes and sixty-six pupils, three of whom do not read the Scriptures. This would probably furnish from fifteen to twenty volumes a year to each reading pupil, without interchange. Now, we hold this to be utterly preposterous. A million and a half of dollars would not supply our schools with libraries on this scale, though they were obtained at the rate of fifteen cents per volume, to say nothing of additions to the amount of fifty thousand or a hundred thousand per annum.

It may be well to look again for a moment to the precise object of a Sunday-school library. Here are one hundred children. Fifteen of them have more Sunday-school books of their own than they can read, and twenty are not sufficiently advanced to read a library book. Of the remaining sixty-five we may suppose that at least one-half attend a daily school, which, with necessary recreation and domestic duties, will occupy most of their time. On the Sabbath they have a Scripture lesson to get, which, if properly studied, will occupy from one to three hours. This, with the attendance on school and public worship, will consume most of the Sabbath. It is obvious, therefore, that very little time can be found by these for the profitable reading of a library book. There remain thirty-three pupils on whom we might depend to take

books. Some of these, however, are averse to reading of any kind ; others are fond of very different reading from that which the Sunday-school library affords, and indulge their vicious inclinations at home, not unfrequently with parental sanction ; and a majority have seen the library so long, and are so accustomed to the titles, character and outward appearance of the books, that they will promise themselves neither instruction or amusement from the use of them. With all these exceptions, however, there will doubtless be found in every school some few pupils who love to read Sunday-school books, and who will always gladly avail themselves of the privileges of the library. For these, then, we must provide, and we should provide the **VERY BEST AND CHOICEST BOOKS** that the market affords or the wit of man can make. Not one vain, irrelevant or superfluous thought or illustration should have a place in them. They should hold the very cream of religious instruction.

Not only so ; the character of these books should be well known to the teachers in whose classes they circulate, and great skill should be employed in adapting the use of the library to the character, habits and peculiar circumstances of the pupil ; so that, as we intimated at first, the teacher shall find the very book that shall be his assistant, coming in at the right moment, with a full understanding of the pupil's case, and giving point and effect to the series of oral instructions which have been imparted from the lesson of the day.

To carry out this plan we need some addition to the present variety, especially in the class of books fitted to the circumstances of the poorer classes.

Thus we have a bird's-eye view of the theory

of the Sunday school library system, as we understand it. And we need not say how different from all this is the practical exhibition of heaps upon heaps of all sorts and descriptions of books, from 8vos. to 64mos., including all departments of natural and moral science, and gathered together from all sources, so long as money or credit would hold out to buy.

And to crown the scene, there is often placed at the door of the book case, some one who knows no more of the contents of the books than if they were in the Hebrew tongue ; and he is required to distribute them by some arbitrary rule which gives the " Five Apprentices" to a girl, and " Letters to a Sister" to a boy ; or, to take a less glaring instance of inconsistency, furnishes a boarding-school girl with " Olive Smith" or " Ann Conover," both written expressly for girls at service, and gives a girl at service " Cousin Clara" or " Ellen Carroll," both written expressly for girls at boarding-school. How could two persons play more completely at cross purposes than the author and the teacher in their respective operations ?

§ IV. It will be perceived that the view we have taken of the purpose and use of a Sunday-school library greatly reduces and simplifies the labour of selecting one. The purchaser may find, perhaps, within the compass of his own knowledge or that of the minister of the congregation, or he may receive from perfectly well known and responsible sources, a collection of at least five hundred Sunday-school books. Surely out of all these he may gather up a library of three or four hundred volumes (if needed) of appropriate and attractive religious reading, which will suffice, and much more

than suffice, as we apprehend, for the wants of ninety-nine in a hundred of the Sunday-schools of the United States.

We are aware of the multitude of experiments that have been tried, and of the approved and ingenious plans that now prevail for the distribution of libraries. We have hosts of them now before us with models, and diagrams and explanatory cuts appropriate to each. We do not present them to our readers, however, because there is in them all, so far as we know, ONE RADICAL AND FATAL DEFECT; they do not require the teacher to be familiar with the character and design of the books. In the absence of this grand feature, whatever may be the superiority of one system to another, they are altogether incapable of making the library an efficient auxiliary to the teacher, which, as we have before shown, is its great use and purpose.

For example. In a school we once visited, the library was divided into three sections or departments. The first was filled with books from 24 pages to 72; the second with books from 72 to 200; and the third with books over 200 pages, or such as are designed chiefly for adult readers. From the first department children under seven years of age were directed to furnish themselves, those from seven to twelve years old were supplied from the second, and all members of the school over twelve might select from the whole library, but the volumes over 200 pages were particularly appropriated to them. In the first department, for the youngest children, might be found a volume on parental duties; in the second, for children between seven and twelve, "Porteus on Popery," "Pastoral Sketches," and "Foster on Decision of Charac

ter ;" and in the third, for youth and adults, "Early Lessons," "Tales for the Nursery," &c. And even if such a library were confined to the publications of the American Sunday-school Union, such an arbitrary division would occasion the most ludicrous (if they were not most melancholy) instances of inconsistency. The "Missionary Manual," explanatory of the Map of the World, would go into the infant classes, and "Infant's Progress" and the "Infant's Magazine" would all but fall into the hands of adults ; while "Charles Clifford," the "Only Son," and the "Life of Daniel," would be excluded from all pupils under twelve years of age !

We need not multiply illustrations of the lack of skill and good sense which is apparent in many other methods of distributing a library. They are doubtless intended to simplify the process, to save the time of the school, to prevent confusion, or to secure a more thorough reading of the books. But they have failed, some in one respect and some in another ; and even in schools where there is much intelligence and piety, and pains-taking in respect to the use of the library, a very slight examination of individual pupils confirms the opinion we just now expressed, that the prevailing systems, even when administered under the most favourable circumstances, are radically and fatally defective.

§ V. We suppose every Sunday-school teacher is anxious to discharge his duty faithfully. To this end he endeavours to furnish himself with a full knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and especially that portion which may be the subject of a weekly lesson. Among the aids which are offered to him is a Dictionary of the Bible, prepared expressly and at great expense for his use, containing a rich fund

of biblical knowledge arranged under each important word of the sacred volume. Next a treatise on the Geography of the Bible, with maps, &c.; then a treatise on the Natural History of the Bible, with explanatory and illustrative engravings; and a treatise on the Antiquities of the Bible, embracing all the most important topics of inquiry respecting the origin, laws, customs, religion and history of the Jewish nation. These, and a variety of similar works, introduce him to the facts of our holy religion; and then there are thrown into his hands volume after volume, illustrating particular scenes and incidents of the sacred history, and designed to explain and enforce its doctrines and precepts. He is also furnished with question books, in which the substance of the Bible is divided into suitable sections for weekly study, and proper questions are raised on each topic, which the pupil is required to answer. These questions may be modified to any extent, and they allow the teacher any range he can wish for enlargement and illustration, or for the introduction of any views of doctrine or duty which he may feel bound to inculcate; but, over and above all this, there are put within his reach some four or five hundred volumes, embracing almost every subject of Sabbath-school instruction, and treating of them in almost every variety of style and method. Each of these books is a silent assistant teacher, which he can send home with his pupil, as a kind of closet companion for himself and the whole family, whom it costs nothing to entertain, and from whom he and they can learn more fully the importance and bearing of the great truths of religion which may have occupied his attention in the Sabbath-school.

Now, suppose the teacher to be very anxious to preserve the impression made on the mind of a particular pupil by a lesson from the first fifteen verses of the third chapter of John—the discourse between Christ and Nicodemus. That great doctrine of regeneration by the Spirit of God has been the subject of instruction in the school, and this boy's mind seems to have been considerably interested in it. It is a critical moment; a very slight circumstance may excite still more his attention, stimulate inquiry, and deepen impressions, or divert the mind entirely, and blast the hope of the teacher's heart. Will he send that boy home with a man who he knows will talk to him all the way about astronomy or natural theology: and, when they arrived at the house, show him pictures, and try experiments? Would he not choose rather to give him the company of a judicious, kind, Christian friend, who would take an interest in his state of mind, and pursue and enlarge upon the great subject which has arrested the child's attention, explaining its difficulties, enforcing its vital importance, and showing its connexion with the highest and most momentous interests of the soul: and all this in a way far better, perhaps, than the teacher himself could hope to attain? In other words; shall the boy's library book that day be the "Child's Book on Natural Theology" or "First Lessons in Religion?" The former may be an admirable book, and entirely proper for a Sunday-school library, but the question now respects only the proper use of the books in the library, not what is proper to be placed there. The teacher knows nothing of either book, or, if he knows them by the title only, he may suppose the former to be as suitable to the child's circumstances as the latter. If,

therefore, by any arbitrary arrangement in the distribution of the books, the former falls to this boy rather than the latter; the teacher may not heed it, and yet the result of that arrangement may affect most disastrously the eternal well-being of the boy. Possibly it would have been far better for him if the library had never been open.

Suppose, however, that the teacher is familiar with the character of these two books. He knows that "First Lessons" contains a familiar and striking exhibition of the great doctrines of the incarnation and atonement of Jesus Christ, and of the nature and evidences of regeneration; and that if he can, by any motive presented to the lad's mind, prevail on him to take this book home and read it attentively, he may hope to preserve and deepen the impression which seems to be made on his mind. He addresses him thus:—

"Charles, here is a little book which I should be glad to have you read. I have read it myself with a great deal of interest, and, I trust, not without profit. I have selected it for you at this particular time, because I think it may be especially interesting to you; and I will take it as a personal favour if you will read it with attention, and tell me next Sabbath what you may learn from it. I have put a mark at two of the chapters which deserve to be read and much thought of. I should be glad to be with you myself; but as this is not in my power, I give you this silent but profitable companion, whom you can consult at every leisure moment of the week. The Bible you always have as the great source of knowledge, and this little book is valuable only so far as it leads you to the Bible for direction.

and to the Author of the Bible for grace to help you in every time of need."

When the next Sabbath comes, and the lesson for the day has received due attention, Charles is called upon for an account of his book, and the class is invited to attend to his answer. The leading subjects of the book are then brought out to view, and especially those of the two most important chapters. The teacher is enabled to judge of the strong or weak points in the pupil's apprehension of truth, to correct what is erroneous, and to establish and enforce what is sound and true. The rest of the class can scarcely avoid being interested in such an examination; and the fifteen or twenty minutes thus spent are often worth more than all the rest of Sunday-school time. The teacher may, moreover, so manage his questions and answers as to excite a desire in one or more of the other boys to read the same book; and in the end, the contents of that volume—the preparation of which may have cost months of labour, and been attended with many fervent prayers—will become the possession of every mind in the class, and remain so to the end of life.

Perhaps we shall be told that all this looks very well upon paper, but where are the teachers who are competent and willing to go through all this laborious service? We ask, in reply, where are the teachers that are willing to do their duty?

Perhaps, however, it may seem to some who admit the reasonableness of our views, utterly impracticable to obtain such a knowledge of the library as is above supposed, even with all the attention they can bestow; but we believe there are very few who could not obtain it with ease, if they felt its importance and had a mind to the work.

We will suppose a teacher to be just commencing his official labours. He has a class of eight boys from ten to thirteen years of age, all able to use the library. He is occupied in a business that consumes all his time day by day. The evenings, however, are his own, though for most of them he has indispensable employments at lectures, prayer meetings, teachers' meetings, social duties, and private business, so that there is left for him not more than five hours in the week in which to prepare himself for his Sunday-school labours. Three hours of that time must be given to the lesson, and the other two will be left for the library. Now, there are nearly two hundred bound books on the catalogue of the American Sunday-school Union alone, ranging from 36 to 126 pages, with any one of which a teacher of ordinary abilities can make himself acquainted in two hours. Of some of them he could read two or three volumes every week. For the first week, let him take "The Watch Chain," (54 pp.;) second week, "Bad Boy's Progress," (54 pp.;) third week, "Harvest," (54 pp.;) fourth week, "Memorial for Sunday-school Boys," (72 pp.;) fifth week, "Robert Benton," (72 pp.;) sixth week, "The Good Son," (72 pp.;) seventh week, "Christ our Saviour," (72 pp.;) and eighth week, "The Bible is True," (90 pp.) This series we might extend to the fifty-two weeks of the year were it necessary, but our purpose will be answered by the term of eight weeks, corresponding to the number in the class. Having read "The Watch Chain" carefully, so as to retain in his memory a general impression of its leading incidents and design, he says to one of the class, "John, I have

selected a library book for you, which I have read with some care ; I wish you to read it carefully, and tell me next Sabbath what you think about it. If there is any thing in it which you think wrong, or which you do not understand, I shall expect you will tell me what it is." So he gives John the book, and takes home for himself "The Bad Boy's Progress," which he examines in like manner. When the Sabbath comes, John is there with his book, on which he is examined sufficiently to determine whether he has read it properly, and the opportunity is improved to correct, explain, illustrate, or enforce the truth, as circumstances may require, not to him only, but to the whole class.

"The Watch Chain" is then given to Thomas, and the "Bad Boy's Progress" to John. As two boys are to be examined on their books the next Sabbath, the time for each must be apportioned accordingly ; and when the series of eight books is finished, it may not be practicable to do any more, ordinarily, than simply ask three or four general questions of each boy. As for example : on the book for the eighth week, "The Bible is True," the pupil might be asked why the fulfilment of prophecy is an evidence of the truth of the Bible ? And what one prophecy he can name that has been remarkably fulfilled ? Two questions like these would sufficiently test his knowledge of the volume. And if in any case it appeared that due attention had not been given to it, the book should be left in his hands until it is properly read. If this stock of eight books has been judiciously selected, it will last this class, by interchanges, until the teacher has an opportunity to examine another, and, if he

pleases, a larger series; as the Life of Edwards, Oberlin, Spener, Knox, Newton, Thomason Brainerd, Eliot, Pearce, Harvey Boys and Ring-leader. In cases of particular interest, like the one supposed a few moments since, the ordinary routine must be temporarily interrupted. If it should be asked, how we would supply the wants of several teachers who may all fix their eye on one volume for a like purpose? we would reply, that there are several books in every well-selected Sunday-school library that treat more or less fully on the particular doctrines of salvation. It is not probable that several minds would be found in precisely the same stage of impressions on the same Sabbath; and whenever the general state of the school is one of deep and anxious solicitude about the soul, it is not probable that godly teachers or sincere inquirers would be conversant with much else besides the Bible and the place of prayer.

It will be observed that we have supposed the case of one whose time is very limited. Most teachers, especially females, need find no difficulty in keeping ahead of their classes in the use of the library; and at any time the reading of the class can be suspended a while, to afford the teacher an opportunity to secure this advantage.*

* That our views of this subject are not singular or visionary, we could easily show. Suffice it to say, the report of the Massachusetts Sunday-school Union for 1830, explicitly recommends "that each school should purchase a sufficient number of each book to furnish the whole class and the teacher, and when a set has been retained two or three weeks, let it pass to the next class, and so through the whole school."

And a popular writer says: "To any teacher who has the

We hold, that such a kind and degree of knowledge of the library as has been supposed, is essential to the teacher in order to the proper use of the library by the pupil, because no less will enable

means, we would strongly recommend the following plan of mastering the library. Let him lay by a sum of money weekly or monthly, as a fund to purchase his own private Sunday-school library, buying no more than one or two at once, and reading those before he procures more. He will soon have read enough to be able to know what to give to his class, and with interchanges to keep them supplied for some months. By taking this course he will become more familiar with the books, and appreciate them better, than if he should depend on the book-case at school. Besides, it is a great convenience to have a private collection for reference, when preparing either for the lesson or for the distribution.

"But whether he will find it convenient to do this or not, he will not forget to make the use of the library a subject of forethought, as well as the lesson itself. What books will illustrate the manners, scenes and characters in this lesson? What will best enforce its precepts and explain its truths? What shall I put in Henry's hand to suit the views he is disposed to take of this matter? What shall I give to Charles that will be likely to touch his conscience? Of this kind are the inquiries that will arise in his mind as he looks forward to his Sabbath duties; and as he thus provides for the various wants of his pupils, he cannot help feeling how great is the teacher's responsibility in directing the reading of his class. It will be a new incentive to studying the disposition and character of each one on his roll, and of watching the changes that follow his interviews. This is the way to become truly and personally interested in the case of each individual in his charge; and this intimacy, even in the process of acquirement, will make his office one of the most engaging to the feelings, as well as one of the most influential in its moral results, that man can hold."

And says another. "A law of our school requires the teacher to read a book regularly within a given time, and in this way we expect them to become familiar with all our books, and qualified to discover whether their pupils read them."

the teacher to select, direct and improve the pupil's reading. The office of librarian in a Sabbath-school is, for the most part, merely mechanical. He enters, arranges and distributes the books, and keeps them in due order. But as to any knowledge of the contents of this or that particular volume, or of the relative fitness of books and their readers, few librarians would make the least pretensions, or could maintain it if they did. In truth, it is in the nature of things impossible that the librarian can know the character, circumstances, and attainments of sixty children, so as to be able to determine what book is suitable for them each Sabbath, whatever might be his knowledge of the books themselves. The teacher, and he alone, possesses, or should possess, the proper knowledge of both. There is, therefore, no alternative. If the teacher is not familiar with the books, at least sufficiently so to make it his intelligent and seasonable auxiliary; the library, that most important and expensive appendage of the school, must be of very limited, uncertain and temporary value to the pupils. It is worthy of particular remark in this connexion, that every term of three or four years makes an entire change in the face of the school. Perhaps one-half of the children who have had the advantages of the library have gone away, and their places are supplied by others to whom the old books are all new. Of course the labour of the teacher is not to be repeated with every successive class of pupils. The teacher who is once acquainted with two or three hundred standard volumes, and who adds to this stock fifteen or twenty new books in a year, need not fear any deficiency in this branch of his qualifications.

If it should be said, that though the attainment of such a knowledge of the library, as we would require, is practicable, yet it imposes altogether too severe a task upon teachers ; we reply, that if our libraries are to contain one or two thousand volumes, this objection would certainly be very forcible ; and we will even admit that, on the reduced scale which we propose, a much more laborious and systematic attention would be required of teachers than is now generally bestowed. But though the process would be slow, and perhaps months might elapse before it could be made of practical advantage, yet the result would be worth all it could cost, and much more. It increases the teacher's power and influence beyond all estimate ; it economizes time, money, and intellectual labour, and gives efficiency and endless utility to what is otherwise of little more than nominal advantage to the school. And in a negative view, we avoid the necessity of very large libraries, obtained at great expense, not of money only, but of care and discrimination in the selection of books, and after all at great hazard ; managed with great loss of time and labour, so great as to have occasioned, in many instances, an abandonment of the whole thing ; and distributed without just reference to the age, capacity or circumstances of the pupils ; often furnishing to the youngest that which is fit only for the eldest, to the ignorant that which will profit only the intelligent, and to the most thoughtless that for which only the most reflecting have any taste. So that if we would secure for the teacher, in the most direct and certain way, the proper fruit of his labours, we would persuade him to adopt what is here presented as the better plan.

It is proper to remark that such a course as we have suggested, would not avoid the necessity of keeping some record of the distribution of the books. Without this they would soon be lost. As the object is simply to hold some one responsible for the safe keeping and return of each volume, however, we know of nothing that is cheaper or better adapted to the purpose than the Library Record of the American Sunday-school Union. The library is supposed to be properly arranged, and the books are delivered and charged to the teachers, who distribute them to their pupils, keeping the account of the same in their class-books. A full specimen, directions, &c., are prefixed to the book, which is ruled for immediate use, and may be had for forty cents.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SUSCEPTIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS PECULIAR TO CHILDREN, AND THE ADVANTAGES AND DANGERS CONNECTED WITH IT.

§ I. THE depth of early impressions is calculated to excite at once the zeal and anxiety of the Sunday-school teacher. There are comparatively few prejudices to remove, few false opinions to correct, and few obstacles to the right understanding of the simple truths which form the basis of the Christian faith.

The fact that impressions made on the infant

mind are so deep and permanent furnishes one of the strongest motives to early effort; and another fact, viz. : that the existence of these impressions is oftentimes concealed for years, and even until ripe manhood, should serve to animate us under the seeming fruitlessness of our present labours. A few striking illustrations of the principle to which we have just alluded, will not be out of place.

John Flavel preached a sermon on the text, "*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.*" When he was about to pronounce the apostolic benediction, he paused and asked how he could do it over an assembly where were probably many persons under the dreadful curse denounced in his text. The effect was very powerful. One conversion took place on the spot. A lad was present, fifteen years of age, who lived to be one hundred and sixteen, and he was converted at the age of one hundred by means of a vivid recollection of Flavel's sermon and the incident above named.

Rev. Levi Parsons (one of our early missionaries to Asia) addressed the following to his father, under date, Syra, Oct. 15, 1821.

"During my sickness I have had occasion often to bless my parents for teaching me the Scriptures. When a very little child, they required me to learn the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes, twelfth chapter of Romans, and the twelfth chapter of Hebrews. Almost every verse of these chapters has ever since remained in my mind: and twenty-five years after, when on a sick, and in the opinion of all around, a dying bed, some of these passages gave me the greatest consolation.

"No person, in this world, can fully value the

instruction of very little children. Impressions then made are remembered, and, beyond a doubt, lead many to repentance twenty, thirty or fifty years after."

A clergyman who was officiating as seaman's chaplain, in one of our southern ports, was called to the sick-bed of a sailor; apparently at the gates of death, from the effects of his licentiousness. He was extremely hardened in sin, and refused to listen to the counsel of religious friends. One day, however, the sick man made use of an expression, by which the chaplain suspected that he was a Scotchman. To ascertain the fact, he repeated a verse of that version of the Psalms, still in use among the churches of Scotland.

"Such pity as a father hath
Unto his children dear;
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship him in fear."

The chords of his heart vibrated to the well-known language. Tears came into his eyes. The chaplain improved his advantage, and ventured an allusion to his mother. The poor prodigal burst into tears. He admitted himself to be the child of a praying mother, who had often commended him to God. He had left her long before, to become a wanderer on the face of the great deep. No longer he repelled the kind attentions of the chaplain; and after his recovery, his instructor had the satisfaction of seeing him give evidence that he was an humble, penitent child of God.

The mother of Dr. Samuel Johnson was a woman of great good sense and piety; and she was the means of early impressing religious principles on the mind of her son. He used to say that he

distinctly remembered having had the first notice of heaven, "a place to which good people go," and hell, "a place to which bad people go," communicated to him by her, when a little child in bed with her; and that it might be the better fixed in his memory, she sent him to repeat it to her man-servant.

§ II. Without multiplying illustrations of the principle, we would remark that this very susceptibility of religious impressions has a strong influence in fostering self-deception, in leading children to mistake mere natural impulse for the exercise of the spiritual life, conviction of sin for conversion of heart, feeling for principle, interest in the mechanical form of instruction for interest in the gospel.

There may be very considerable influence upon the mind, conscience and conversation, without the radical change of heart, the penitent abhorrence of sin, that turns to the blood of Christ, that it may be "purged from dead works to serve the living God." Spiritual dispositions as well as external duties, may be fearfully counterfeited, and therefore their evidences must be carefully sifted, and tried much more by consistent conduct, than by the most intelligent and blameless profession.

There are corresponding advantages, however, many and great, resulting from the same characteristics of childhood.

"Religious instruction," says one, "should be communicated early, because it can then be communicated most agreeably. The religion which is taken up after the character is formed, is, commonly, attained with pain and difficulty; it has more in it of the taskmaster, than of the companion and the friend. Hence it is that the Christianity, the sincere Christianity of many worthy and

valuable persons is, too often, gloomy and repulsive. But, when the infant spirit is, gently and insensibly, drawn to delight itself in God; when the endearments of parental kindness are associated with daily lessons of religious truth; when the child has been habituated to look to its parents, in the place of God, and drawn to look through its parents, up to God; when it has learned to extend the notion of natural parents, friends, protectors and benefactors, and to apply this extended notion, in a higher sense, to the great and good God; then provision is made for uniting the sense of happiness with all religious exercises. And, in after life, to go to the place of public worship, to join in family prayer, to engage in the secret devotions of the closet—all these things, instead of being irksome, will be delightful; it will be going to a Father's house; taking sweet counsel with those whom we love; and feeding on thoughts which transport us from a world of vanity and vexation, to the calm delightfulness of heavenly enjoyment.”*

Religious education should be commenced early, for the additional reason that it may be then prosecuted most successfully. So strong was Richard Baxter's conviction on this point, that he ventured to say that if suitable pains were taken in the religious instruction and discipline of children, the preaching of the gospel would not be the ordinary means of converting sinners; meaning that they would generally be converted before they were at age to receive their first saving impressions from public discourses.

§ III. When we speak of religious education

* Bishop Jebb.

we mean, of course, EDUCATION FOR GOD, and this implies (as we have already hinted) not merely an education in the science of religion, but the feeling and experience of its transforming power upon the heart. We mean that in the whole course of the pupil's life there should be presented continually to his mind the obligations and relations he sustains as a creature of God, and a subject of his moral government: but more especially the new relations and obligations which rest upon him under the dispensation of mercy through JESUS CHRIST.

We mean that the grand ultimate object of all his tutors and governors in every branch and department of instruction should be, with God's blessing, to make him, while he is a child, a believer in the Bible, the whole Bible, and (so far as religion is concerned) nothing but the Bible. Knowing that snares are spread all around his feet, and that he is to wrestle not only "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," we would arm him for the conflict in his childhood, that he may grow up in his armour, and then, when the contest begins with his own lusts, with the adversary of his soul, with the world, the flesh and the devil, he will turn from the narrow way, neither to the right hand nor to the left; his countenance will not blanch, nor his strength forsake him; clad in the armour of God, his loins girt about with truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the shield of faith glittering upon him, his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation upon his head, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) in his hand; we can look upon his

advancing course with exulting joy. Thus did the fathers of the ancient church—thus did the fathers of this land educate their children; and would that their principles were recognised and adopted more generally in the systems of modern invention.

What is a child's religion? What dependence may be placed on religious character or profession, at an immature age? What advances in Christian knowledge and experience may be expected and required before an outward profession is encouraged? are questions more easily asked than answered.

There are often found in the biographies of children, supposed to have died in faith, expressions of hope, submission and even triumph; the very terms of which, we are sure, from the circumstances and education of the child, could be made intelligible to its own mind only by a supernatural power. And often, too, the conduct and appearance of children, as described by survivors, are so unnatural and forced, as to shock any considerate person, and seem incredible even to the most credulous.

Well authenticated and judicious narratives of the triumphs of religion in the dying hours of intelligent children, are calculated to be useful, and are always interesting. But there are attendant dangers which need to be guarded against. To connect religion with personal notoriety and praise, is a peculiarly dangerous temptation to children. We have heard of children who expressed a wish to be pious, in order that a pretty book might be written about them.*

* The following anecdote, whilst it does not prove that the kind of books referred to may not be of the greatest use to

Great caution should be used at all times in conversing with pious children, lest they be ensnared by the kind of notice and applause which they receive. Peculiar care should be taken on this subject when a child is on a death-bed. That time is too often made the occasion of religious flattery, with persons of all ages, and especially of those who are professedly Christians. The hour of death

children, furnishes a good caution, and one that is especially appropriate to those who are inclined to praise "good children."

The child was nine years old, and was very little acquainted with religious story books, and the few which she was permitted to read were selected with great care. Her mind had imbibed a love for the Holy Scriptures which rendered such auxiliaries quite unnecessary; at six years old she read the Scriptures with references, and devoted to that study all her leisure moments. She kept a Bible always under her pillow that she might read it in the morning before she dressed; and when her parents happened to spend an evening from home, she always asked for a candle in the parlour for the purpose of reading, in preference to playing in the nursery with her brother and sister: A Christian friend one day brought her "Janeway's Token for Children," detailing the happy deaths, and extraordinary experience of very young children. She had not read long when she laid down the book with a look of some perplexity, and sat still, evidently deeply engaged in thinking; her mother at length inquired how she liked the new book; she answered, "I like it, and yet I don't like it." When asked to explain, she said it was very interesting indeed, and very useful to *parents* to read, because it would encourage them to begin religious instruction early, "but I do not think it fit for children." "Why so?" her mother inquired. She said she thought it calculated to teach children to say fine things which they might not feel. "For my part," she continued, "I will not read it any longer, for I fear I would soon not know whether I was thinking my own thoughts, or only trying to persuade myself that I was one of the *wonderful little children*."

is said to be an honest one with the dying—it should be equally so with the Christian friends who converse with them.

Our attention is constantly drawn to this subject by memoirs and obituaries of children, in which no evidence whatever of an intelligent exercise of Christian faith is given. The friends who surrounded the bed appear to have been satisfied with the commonplace remarks which the dying child has made, without any inquiries to learn what meaning, if any, the child actually attached to them.

We remember the case of a Sunday-school boy eight or ten years of age, who was supposed to be dying of a scrofulous affection. His mother was a poor widow, and the circumstances of the family attracted much notice and sympathy in the neighbourhood. The child was wasted to a mere skeleton, and all hopes of his recovery were extinguished. He was frequently visited by his teacher and others of the Sunday-school to which he belonged, and the evidences he gave of true conversion were considered very remarkable. Having become interested in the glowing accounts which were given of his intelligence and submission, we visited him, and, at the request of several religious friends, procured the services of an artist to preserve a sketch of his appearance as he lay stretched (as it was supposed) upon the bed of death. His conversation was confined to very general remarks and answers to leading questions which could not be well answered in but one way: for example—Do you find Christ precious to your soul? What do you think of your own heart? Had you rather live in this world of sin and temptation, or go to Christ and be happy?

Contrary to all expectation, the child recovered,

and plainly showed in his subsequent life that he was a stranger to the power of godliness.

In another instance, a little boy three years old was regarded as giving conclusive evidence of piety in the following dialogue. He said to his mother, "Do you know that hymn,

‘Ye servants of God,
Your Master proclaim?’ ”

"Yes, dear, I do." "Well, 'All victorious' is in that hymn." Then, raising his hand to his breast, he said, "'All victorious' is here." A short time after, he desired an attendant to carry him to the glass, which she did. Then said she to him, "What did you see in the glass?" He replied, "I see 'All victorious.' Where is he, ma?" "I didn't see him." Then, laying his hand on his breast, he said, "HERE is 'All victorious.' "

Such instances should not bring authentic accounts of early religious experience into discredit, though it should lead to caution and discrimination.

There is nothing in the constitution of the human mind nor in the nature of religious truth that presents any obstacle to the formation of Christian character in early life. We know not another, among all the classes of impenitent sinners, for whose immediate conversion there is so much encouragement to labour and pray as for that of the child thoroughly educated in the Sabbath-school.

It was ascertained not long since concerning five hundred and seven students, residing at six of the principal theological seminaries in this country, (of three different denominations,) that three hundred and thirteen were instructed in Sunday-schools, and that the average age of the whole at the time of con-

version was a fraction over sixteen years. And in relation to fifty young men in one of those seminaries, it is asserted that thirty-eight or nearly four-fifths became converts under Sunday-school instruction.

It sometimes becomes a very interesting and anxious inquiry of the Sunday-school teacher, How shall I treat a pupil whose mind is apparently under special impressions of religious truth?

There is no doubt that some very young children have quite serious impressions, and that they are suffered to wear off, because they have none to whom they can disclose their feelings. A child is very sensitive when first impressed with the idea that he is a sinner, and will seldom tell any one of his feelings, unless it is particularly requested of him. Before two or three persons, it is almost impossible to get a word from him on the subject. He will be strongly tempted to deny the truth, and utter a falsehood, rather than relate that which burdens his whole soul, before his parents, brothers and sisters. It is of the first importance that parents should converse with their children individually, feelingly, and pointedly, and know, as well as it is possible for them to know, what views they entertain of themselves as sinners against a holy God. Children will generally express their feelings more freely to their Sabbath-school teacher than to their own parents. But why is this? Simply because their teachers are more acquainted with their hearts; they converse with them more frequently, and question them more closely. They go to the heart, and make thorough work in their examination of their feelings and desires.

The following anecdote shows that this want of

sympathy with a serious pupil may result in the dissipation of all his religious thoughts.

“Not many years ago, when I resided in the town of B——, there was an extensive revival of religion, and many Sabbath-school scholars were among its subjects.

“At that time I had charge of a very interesting class, in a school containing more than one hundred scholars, and at their request, very frequently met them at my house for prayer and religious conversation. This meeting was the means of deepening their serious impressions, and I trust, in the providence of God, was blessed to the conversion of one or more of their number. When my scholars became interested in the meeting, they wished to have others of their young friends, who were not members of my class, meet with us, and occasionally I invited a number of them.

“Among those who came was a very interesting boy, about twelve years of age, a member of another teacher's class. The first time he came I found him very seriously impressed. At the subsequent meetings he appeared to be more and more anxious about his soul, until he expressed a hope that he had passed from death unto life, and had indeed found Christ to be precious. I felt very much interested in the boy, and not having sufficient opportunity at our meetings to converse with him, and ascertain the state of his mind, I one day called upon his teacher, with a view to learn from him what I had not been able to find out myself. When I mentioned W—— as having a hope that he had a new heart, the teacher started back, exclaiming, ‘I did not know that he was at all serious! I never noticed any thing in his appearance, which

led me to suppose that he was so, and I cannot tell you any thing about him.' What! is it possible in the time of a revival of religion, and a revival too among the youth, that a Sabbath-school teacher, who has immediate access to the hearts of his scholars, should not know that one of them was seriously impressed, and indulging a hope of everlasting life?"

And, on the other hand, care is necessary lest we be too credulous on this subject, and unwittingly foster pride and hypocrisy. It should be always borne in mind that children are easily flattered; and with nothing more than with the idea of being serious, where religion is continually held up, as it ought to be, as the one thing needful. If they are noticed and treated with particular attention, or made conspicuous, on account of being under serious impressions, it will almost certainly inflate them with pride, and perhaps dissipate their good impressions. This will be particularly injurious to those that are naturally forward.

Again, there is a proneness in young Christians to seek comfort instead of duty. This tendency must be counteracted by showing them, that while the joy of the believer springs from a sense of pardoned sin, it is also found in doing the will of God. Comfort ought not to be expected but in the harmonious operation of both these principles. Young Christians should be exhorted to make the Bible, and not the imperfect example of others, the standard of religion; and be instructed that religion does not contain a principle of self-sustaining energy, independent of efforts to enlarge and invigorate it; and that their piety should not be periodical, but

permanent as a well of water, "springing up unto everlasting life."

There are practices adopted by many Sunday-schools in seasons of religious excitement, which, though in some respects beneficial, are on the whole inadvisable. Among these we should place prayer meetings held and conducted *by children*.

Serious impressions have been known to be dissipated by the vanity created by these meetings. The habit of secret prayer, and the diligent study of the Scriptures, will be found, in most cases, the safest course for children who seem to be under the influence of the Spirit; or, if desirable, they can meet with the teacher, when he may lead their devotions.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AS AFFECTED BY LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

§ I. SUNDAY-SCHOOLS in cities and large towns require peculiar means for their maintenance and extension. Their influence is more important, and the facilities for sustaining them much greater. In cities there is a concentration of good as well as of evil. Moral strength is more easily combined and exerts itself more directly and sensibly upon society. There is also a frightful mass of depravity hidden from public observation, or overlooked in the confusion and bustle of a crowd, except when it breaks out in some revolting crime, so as to startle, for a moment, the whole community.

An old writer describes the ignorant and neglected children, who constitute a large item in this amount of sin and suffering, as "the little dirty infantry which swarm up and down the alleys and lanes, with curses and ribaldry in their mouths; and other rude behaviour, as if they were intended to put off their humanity and degenerate into brutes."

These should be eminently the subjects of Sunday-school instruction and influence. To persuade and prepare them to attend a school; to form them to habits of attention, cleanliness, punctuality and good order; to preserve them from the ruinous influence of intemperate, dishonest, brawling and licentious parents, and from the contamination of vicious examples and associates; to awaken in them a desire for wisdom and knowledge; and to draw out their intellectual faculties and moral susceptibilities, are among the most severe and discouraging duties of Sunday-school teachers in cities. If their efforts fail, such children swell the class of youth who crowd the streets, free from the restraints of a proper guardianship, and without the powerful influence of a settled, quiet, well ordered home. Hundreds come in from the country in pursuit of trades and employment, who are thrown into promiscuous association in boarding-houses, over whom there is no sort of supervision whatever except during the working hours of the day. Thus left to themselves, without instruction or the attractions of domestic society, they naturally seek excitement in the street or elsewhere.

It is not required of us to do all that needs to be done, but all we can do; and it is to be feared, that by this reasonable standard of judgment, multitudes would be condemned. It is not uncommon to find,

in our city schools, many classes without regular teachers; and unoccupied room for hundreds of new pupils, while within the circuit of half a mile may be found hosts of children in companies; some playing; some swearing and in fierce contention; some standing about the markets, and tippling-shops and gambling establishments, hearing and learning the language of the profane, the debauchee and the scoffing infidel. As we pass to church we see them blocking up the walk before us, eagerly engaged in their licentious and degrading sports and pastimes, ripe for strife and riot, and abusing all who dare to rebuke them for their sins. Many thousands are without the means of learning to read. The institution, whose glory it is said to be to carry the blessings of religious training to the poor and destitute, fails in countless instances to bless them; while its advantages are heaped upon others, who have Christian homes and Christian friends, and who live under Christian influences. Many hundreds, if not thousands, may be found, who have been members of a Sabbath-school for different periods of time, varying from one week to several years, but have left them, with or without cause, and are now among the most hardened and intractable of all. Have we churches, spacious and beautiful; renowned ministers; school-rooms in abundance; and benevolent people to give, and to work, and to pray? and yet the blessings of salvation flow not to hundreds of habitations, where sin, and sorrow, and death reign with terrible power. And even when efforts have been made to carry Sunday-school instruction into these neighbourhoods, they have been so feebly sustained as often to fail.

The organization of Sunday-schools needs to be peculiarly efficient and complete in our cities, not only because of the peculiar character of the population and of their habits, but because the city is the seat of sensation for the country beyond, and the influence of its institutions and movements is felt at once and at the remotest point.

§ II. In the new and thinly settled sections of our country, Sunday-schools require another and a different sort of organization and care. Where the habits and abodes of the people are unsettled, and especially in the western States, to which cheap and fertile lands have drawn an immense mixed population, the opportunities of instruction to the larger part of the community are very limited, and the difficulties in the way of establishing Sunday-schools on any plan, are quite formidable. They are found in the prejudices which evil-minded men have created; in the low state of religion, and common education; in the want of well organized religious congregations; in the consequent want of houses of worship in some part of which schools may be convened; in the want of common school-rooms for a similar purpose; in the want of ministerial influence to encourage the scholars; in the want of self-denying teachers who love Christ and his cause enough to make sacrifices, to do service, to live for God; in the want of qualified superintendents; and, finally, in the scattered state of the population. The reader will at once perceive a thousand embarrassments springing from such causes. In running the eye over the valley of the west, we must not look for innumerable thriving villages located within short distances, and showing the neat church and school-house. A few county towns will be seen far re-

moved from each other, and the intervening distance covered with new farms, prairies or woodlands. In the towns are settled persons, many of whom have no affinity to a Sunday-school. The country is inhabited by new settlers, many of whom place too low an estimate on education. Generally the gospel is not preached in one place every Sabbath, but only occasionally. Of course, the minister who visits several places in rotation, and has many cares on his mind, will yield but a feeble support to the school when he is seen not more than once in a month. For these and similar reasons, that part of the country will require patient and long continued exertion; a much greater amount of agency; and a larger expenditure of books to establish and sustain the schools, than has yet been employed or contemplated. An agent has not done his work when he has procured a subscription and received a pledge that a school shall go into operation. He must himself see it in operation, or in all probability it will never move. When it is once in operation, the difference between a school composed of educated teachers and scholars, and one where neither teachers nor scholars are suitably educated, is immense. The one has, comparatively speaking, the principle of life and activity within itself. The other has not. The establishment of new schools will always depend in a great measure on the interest excited by old ones in the neighbourhood. And it will be found almost, if not quite impossible to institute one near the ruins of a former.

Some have been disposed to think lightly of special agencies for the establishment of Sunday-schools, chiefly because such labours must be wasted, they think, unless there are intelligent and

interested persons to officiate as teachers and officers ; and if there are such persons, the work can be done without the interposition of agencies from abroad. The necessity of such persons to sustain a Sunday-school no one will deny ; and the language of frequent appeals has been, " If you have any faithful, devoted Sunday-school teachers of either sex, who are willing to forsake father and mother, home and kindred, in order to train immortal minds for heaven, (and we are told you have many of both, willing to go for this purpose to heathen lands,) send them out here, and they may secure the reward if not the present fame of missionaries, without burdening any society for their support. Let any young man, for instance, with a good English education, who has given himself to God, and desires above all things to see others brought to the knowledge of the truth, just come to the west, to any destitute neighbourhood, (and such are not scarce;) and though he may not get rich, yet he will do good and will not be permitted to starve. His bread and his water will be sure ; and he will have under his control the training of immortal minds, which, but for this training, must be left to dissipation, vice and ruin. In this same noble cause, hundreds of females could find employment, as some have already done. There are probably three or four thousand neighbourhoods in the Valley of the Mississippi and the south, where a devoted Christian female might plant herself, and gather around her twenty or thirty little children, who would be given up to her guidance with joy by their parents, and whom she might lead to the knowledge, first, of the simple elements of religion in connexion with the teaching of the alphabet and the first rudiments of

human science ; then to the knowledge of the arts of life, and the relations and social duties—their motives and sanctions. She could be a moulding power in the midst of such a people. Her influence would be felt in every house, in every form, by every family and every individual. She could fill such a place with light and knowledge, and form a generation to the praise and glory of God. Bibles, tracts, Sunday-school books, and all the needful implements and apparatus of a common-school and Sunday-school might be obtained without expense ; and if she was a truly pious and exemplary woman, she might win to the love and obedience of the truth, persons of all ages and classes who came under her influence.”

The correctness of these views will not be questioned, but the requisite supply of helpers is not at hand. The appeal is heard in vain. In the mean time, however, other agencies have been active ; in thousands of instances within the last ten years,* the people of a neighbourhood have been assembled and addressed on the design and importance of Sunday-schools. They have listened and yielded their assent. A school has been opened. A library has been put in circulation. The Bible has been studied, and the children and youth of the place have at least been taught the rudiments of the Christian faith. That many schools thus established have failed for want of intelligent and devoted resident labourers, we freely admit, but the testimony on this subject is, after all, highly encouraging.†

* From 1830 to 1840.

† A clergyman long resident at the west, and familiar with the subject of education, lately uttered himself publicly in the following manner:—

That agencies for this purpose should be established on Union principles is very obvious. Denominational schools may be established by their means when they are desired and can be sustained;

"I am ready to bear the most full and unqualified testimony to the efficiency, judgment and fidelity of such of western Sunday-school missionaries as I have known. Such agents are necessary. The people must be convinced of the value of the gospel and its benevolent institutions before they will seek them. If the apostles had built a great church at Jerusalem, and had invited all the world to come up there and hear the gospel, it would have been a vain call—the command was 'GO'—'GO ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' If it should be said that the people are as well off, and as able to maintain their Sunday-schools, ministers, &c., as they are in other parts of the country—what then? Will they do it? Is it done? This is the point. It is expensive to maintain men to traverse that mighty expanse of territory, but it will be a great deal more expensive to take care of a people that are left to the dominion of sin, without any of the restraining and sanctifying influences of the gospel. Is there any cheaper defence of liberty than the diffusion of sound morality and pure religion?

"I am surprised at the number of schools which have escaped the blasting influences of the neglect, indifference and unfaithfulness of those who were intrusted with their preservation. Considering the difficulties with which they have to struggle, it is surprising that such a vast proportion have survived, rather than that some few have failed."

Another says, that "in most cases where there has been a failure of sustaining a school, it has not been a failure to do good—*great good*—INCALCULABLE GOOD. A gentleman in Indiana says of the American Sunday-school Union, their labours have been quite as successful as they could have anticipated. It may even be questioned whether one donation of books has been made, (however injudiciously,) which has not already improved public morals, threefold the amount of the donation."

And the fifteenth annual report of the American Sunday-school Union (1839) thus alludes to this topic.

"The principle of our organization gives us access to new

but as it is well said in a report on this subject to the General Convention of western Baptists in 1834. "There are many settlements, especially in the frontier states, where no one denomination has constant preaching, and where a Sunday-school exclusively conducted by one denomination cannot succeed. In such cases, schools conducted upon union principles by individuals of different evangelical denominations, are desirable,—not by renouncing any portion of revealed truth, or giving sanction to any description of error, but by suspending for the time being such topics as form dividing lines,

settlements, where families of various habits and persuasions are found, who, for the most part, thankfully entertain a plan for the gratuitous instruction of their children. Our missionary invites the neighbourhood together, explains the design and uses of the proposed schools, obtains an expression of opinion, instructs such as he may persuade to serve as teachers, makes provision for a library, perhaps carries the school through the first Sabbath, and then leaves it to take care of itself. If he could revisit it in six months or a year, and keep a general oversight of the schools formed in a given district, so much the better; for such a supervision we have always strenuously contended, but the means to maintain it have never yet been supplied.

"It is not pretended that we can ascertain precisely what number of schools formed in this way in the last ten years are now open. In many sections nine in ten have outlived every prejudice and hinderance, and have proved like well-springs in the desert. If we make the number but two thousand, which is below the lowest estimate we have ever seen, and give but thirty scholars to each school, we shall find that all our expenditures in this form do not average two dollars a head for the whole term of nine years, or less than twenty-five cents per annum to furnish each child with a kind Christian friend and religious teacher, with access to a library of entertaining books, and with the means of grace and salvation."

and teaching in such schools those parts of the word of God in which all can cordially unite."

Our object in adverting to this subject is to present these comparatively destitute parts of our country as requiring a peculiar system of effort for the *organization* of Sunday-schools. The minor points of order, discipline, &c. must be made to conform to circumstances. A western gentleman, familiar with these subjects, has urged the following general plan of operations :

"Let the valley be divided into convenient districts. Let these be supplied with agents. Let these agents be men of prayer, men of zeal, men who have a voice and manner suited to win the hearts and fix the attention of youth. Let the schools be instituted so as to have quarterly or semi-annual examinations, following each other in rotation. Let these be days of unusual interest, calling together parents and ministers of different denominations. Let them be preceded by much prayer. Let the agent take a very active part in examining and addressing the pupils, where the way is open for him to do it. He may attend fifty-two of these examinations in a year, and exert the very best influence on the Sabbath-school cause. Meetings of this kind will be attended by hundreds in the place of tens on ordinary occasions. In the west especially, a great meeting is a great thing. At the close of such a meeting a collection may be taken up, to increase the library of the school. It will altogether surpass ordinary collections. And by empowering the agent, in all cases, where it is necessary, to make a donation of a certain per centage on what is contributed, an immense amount in

books might soon be brought to bear with all its sustaining influence on thousands of valley schools.

“To avoid the too heavy expenses of agents, let self-denying ministers, whose circumstances will permit, undertake gratuitously to supply certain districts ; and let all ministers consider the Sabbath-school as an appropriate field for a portion of their faithful labours. Let them preach about it, pray about it, and train up in the Bible classes well qualified teachers. Let the great public mind be moved, and continue to be moved by conversation, by prayer, by exhortation, and actual self-denying hard labour, and the blessed work will go on, this great valley be reclaimed, and tens of thousands of voices pour forth praises to God for Sunday-school institutions.”

CHAPTER XIX.

GENERAL SUBJECTS.

§ I. *Funds.* Some expenses are necessarily incident to every Sunday-school. The record and class-books, the replenishing of the library from time to time, warming, lighting, cleaning and furnishing the room, are among the usual items. To raise a liberal sum for these purposes is a very small return for a church or congregation to make for the benefits of a Sunday-school. The officers and teachers of the school should never be required to bear this burden. It is enough and more than enough if they do faithfully what they have under-

taken to do in their respective vocations.* To provide liberally, cheerfully and promptly for the expenses of the Sunday-school, should therefore be among the first, if not the very first, on the list of the external duties of the church and congregation.

When the school is gathered from the community at large, contributions and subscriptions are easily obtained, if the school is shown to be well located and judiciously conducted. Where Sunday-school societies are formed for the express purpose of organizing and sustaining schools, within the church or at large, they should furnish all necessary means for their support.

§ II. In regard to contributions of money by children for the support of the school or for other purposes, there is occasion for much discretion. It cannot be questioned that habits of self-denial, generosity, and benevolence, are of great importance, and should be early and studiously cultivated. It is of little advantage to a child, however, to receive money of his parents to give to a specific object. His only merit in such a case is that he does as he is told to do. If a child earns money, or receives it by gift to be at his own disposal, or if he can be induced to forego his own gratification from principle, and that he may contribute what is thus saved to make others happy, it is certainly a desira-

* "It is disgraceful to the church that in so many schools the teachers are often left to bear the principal part, if not the whole, of the expenses; and this, too, in many cases, where their circumstances in life render the devotion of their time as much as can be reasonably expected of them in the cause. The expenses should be provided for by the congregation as faithfully as the minister's salary, or any other debt."—[Report to Teachers' Convention, Philadelphia, 1832.]

ble result. Children are sometimes persuaded to gather berries or raise vegetables for the market, to sew, to weed in the garden, to forego the use of tea, butter, sugar, fruit, &c., for the sake of accumulating something to bestow in charity. If such efforts are made voluntarily and from a desire to secure the means of doing good, and this because to do good affords more gratification than any personal enjoyment which these means would furnish, the benefit to all concerned is obvious. But is it not to be feared that self, oftentimes in another dress, is, after all, the chief object of regard; that the praise which is bestowed on such a course of conduct, the thought of its being talked of and perhaps published in a report or in some juvenile paper, the outdoing of others, &c., may have as much influence, to say the least, as the simple desire to do good for the sake of doing good?

The history of the church in late years abundantly proves that as a general truth, those churches and individuals who have most freely given of their substance to propagate the gospel, have received most freely of spiritual gifts. And if our children could be faithfully instructed in the great truth that all they are and all they have is the Lord's, that they are stewards of his manifold mercies and will be required to account for the improvement they make, even in childhood, of the means and opportunities of doing good which they have or might have, they might be led under God's blessing to form just views of their duty on the subject we are considering, and might act upon a small scale with as much intelligence and judgment as their elders do upon a large scale. In these circumstances suitable objects of benevolence might be presented to them,

and the measure and mode of presenting them might be safely left to their conscience and discrimination.

The practice of collecting money in Sunday-schools for any purpose is, on many accounts, objectionable. Suspicions and jealousies are needlessly awakened. Prejudices are engendered or confirmed; objects of doubtful utility are often introduced, and, under exciting circumstances, are favoured, to the great prejudice of the school. Undue attention is likely to be paid to this department, to the neglect of the more difficult, less interesting, but far more important duty of the religious teacher. If one project of benevolence is entertained, it may be difficult to assign a good reason for excluding another; and thus in the end the grand simple purpose of the Sunday-school is overlooked, and its interest is sustained (if sustained at all) mainly by ever varying novelties and external excitements. Sometimes individual teachers have succeeded in awakening wholesome sympathies in a single class, and so directing their inquiries and exercises as to make them intelligent on a given subject of benevolence; and then without noise or ostentation he may receive from them the fruit of their own industry, or the savings of economy and self-denial, and appropriate them under their direction and as their contributions to the beneficent purpose contemplated. Such a course as this is not liable to many of the abuses and misconstructions of the other, and it is sufficient to say to those who desire to avail themselves of the Sunday-school organization for these purposes, that the same children can be approached in other forms, and that it seems better to preserve this for the distinct object of religious instruction.

§ III. This introduces the question of the expe-

diency of forming benevolent societies in Sunday-schools. We do not pretend to say that no circumstances can occur to make it expedient; but there are certainly very grave objections to it as a general practice. Among these the following may be mentioned.

1. *The primary object of Sunday-schools is more than sufficient to employ all the thoughts, labours and powers of teachers and pupils.* To teach and learn the doctrines of our holy religion as revealed in the Scriptures, with their various relations and sanctions, is enough for the Sunday-schools. If the attention is to be diverted to the organization, management and operation of benevolent societies, the simple, legitimate design of the institution is likely to be proportionably sacrificed.

2. Sunday-schools are generally unobjectionable to the community. Many of the objects claiming the patronage of the benevolent are not so. Whatever prejudices may exist against an object or form of benevolence, will necessarily attach to the Sunday-school that adopts or favours it. Cases illustrative of this point will occur upon the least reflection.

3. There is great danger that invidious distinctions will arise between the children of the rich and those of the poor, especially where the payment of money is the condition of membership in such societies, or where the contributions of different members of the school are made known.

4. As before intimated, the same thing can be done as well without any connexion with Sunday-schools. The pupils or any portion of them can be collected on the week-day, or, if proper, at some hour of the Sabbath not occupied by Sunday-school

duties, and the subject presented under every advantage which properly belongs to it. A church is at liberty to pursue any course it pleases on this subject in schools established in its own connexion; but the practice of engrafting juvenile benevolent societies on Sunday-schools generally, seems to us unnecessary, inexpedient and decidedly objectionable.

§ IV. *Taking children to church.* In many churches, especially in cities, seats are assigned to the Sunday-school children in the gallery, and teachers are appointed in rotation to take charge of them. In some few instances the school is assembled during divine service, and a course of exercises pursued which is supposed to be better adapted to their capacities and circumstances than the ordinary services of the sanctuary.

All will agree, that the habit of regular attendance on public worship is one of great value and importance: and that when it is practicable it is better that children, on such occasions, should be under the immediate supervision of their parents. It will be admitted, also, that, as a general thing, the public services of the Sabbath are not adapted to interest or instruct young children. That they might be well adapted to their circumstances, and at the same time accomplish more certainly all the other ends in view, seems to many beyond question.

The conduct of Sunday-school children when collected together in some remote part of the church, is often very reproachful to themselves and to the institution. If they could be addressed for a proper time on subjects and in language suited to their situation and capacities, it would not be difficult to control and interest them. Whe-

ther, in the absence of the means of instruction more appropriate to their wants, they should not be habitually attendants on the public worship of the congregation, hardly admits of a question. When a school is connected with a church, proper deference should be paid to the views of the constituted ecclesiastical authorities, inasmuch as they are responsible in the first instance, after the parent, for the religious training of the children and youth under their care. In no event, however, should they be led to suppose that the exercises of the Sunday-school can be made a substitute for stated public worship, any more than for parental instruction or private devotion.

§ V. *Anniversaries and public processions.*

There are various opinions as to the propriety or expediency of public exhibitions as connected with Sunday-schools. Without going into the arguments which have been employed on the subject, it may suffice for our purpose to say, that the practice of schools in this and many other respects may safely be left to be regulated by circumstances. In country towns, where such public meetings are comparatively of rare occurrence, and where the schools are small and scattered, great good may result from collecting together teachers and pupils on some proper day, and joining the parents and friends of the school in some public services suitable to the occasion. The excitement of such a scene is often of great service, and to be produced in no way, perhaps, less objectionable. In large cities, where public meetings are of daily occurrence, and where much parade and show (and perhaps expense) are necessary in order to excite interest, the case may be otherwise. We are inclined to the opinion, that whatever tends to

bring children into public notice, and to make them very important in their own eyes, had better be avoided. To them the day of public parade is a day of wearisome recreation. The excitement is usually preceded by an injurious restlessness and impatient anticipation, and followed by languor and indifference.

We have thus passed over the leading topics of practical interest connected with our system of Sunday-schools. To show the path of duty and success is much easier than to pursue it or to persuade others to pursue it. Yet, we cannot but indulge the hope, that while some may be influenced and others excited, all will be impressed with the importance of the work which is given us to do. It is nothing less than to propagate the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ among the children and youth of our country and throughout the earth. If the views we have suggested shall commend themselves to the conscience and good sense of those who are associated in the prosecution of this great design, we shall hope to see them adopted. Our single aim should be to extend the benign influence of the religion we profess, throughout the world; and while our plans and labours are buried with our poor bodies in the dust, the glory of the Redeemer will increase and spread till it shall fill this world of darkness, as it now fills the world of light.

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